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BFI

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- MICHELLE WILLIAMS AND KENNETH LONERGAN ON 'MANCHESTER BY THE SEA'
- 'CAMERAPERSON'
- JEFF NICHOLS'S 'LOVING'
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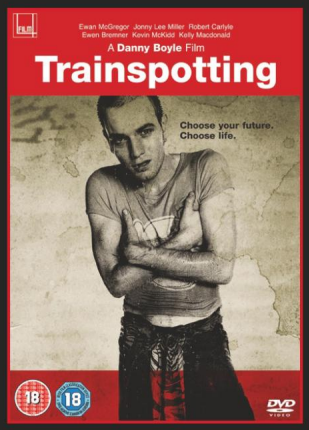

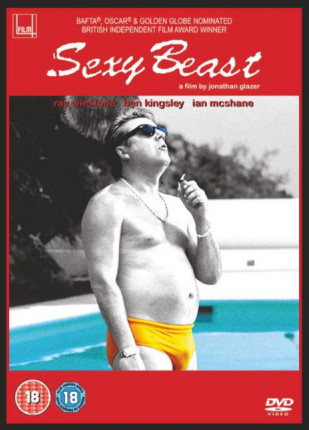

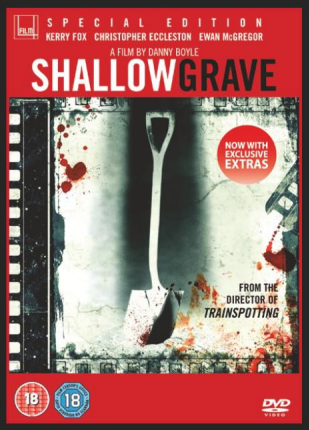

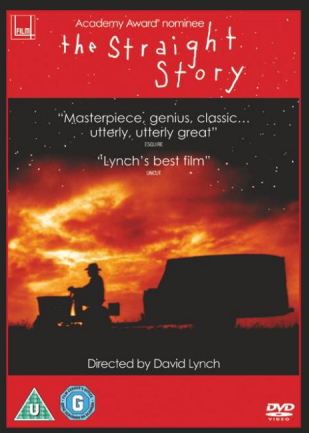

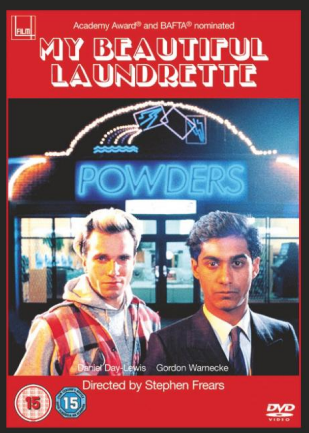

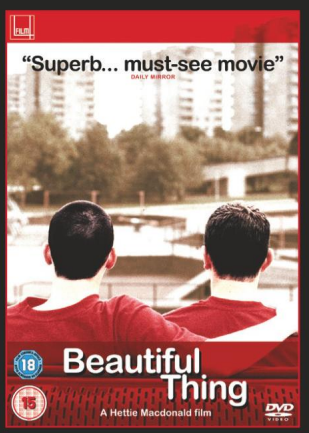

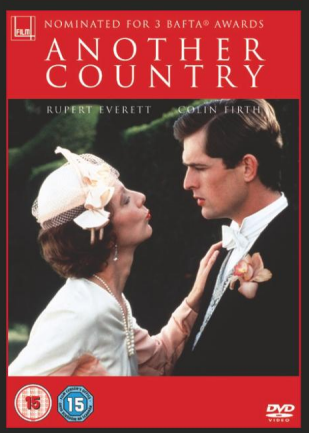

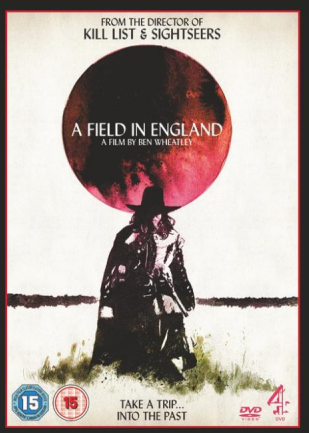

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Editorial enquiries
21 Stephen Street London W1T 1LN
t: 020 7255 1444
w: bfi.org.uk/sightandsound
e: S&S@bfi.org.uk

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f: facebook.com/SightSoundmag
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t: 020 8955 7070
e: sightandsound@abacusemedia.com
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CONTRIBUTORS

Cristina Alvarez López is a freelance film critic

Michael Atkinson's books include *Ghosts in the Machine: The Dark Heart of Pop Cinema*

Ian Christie is professor of film and media history at Birkbeck College, London. His books include *Scorsese on Scorsese*

Sam Davies is a freelance writer

Bryony Dixon is curator of silent film at the BFI National Archive

Ian Francis is a writer, curator and co-director of Birmingham's Flatpack Film Festival

Philip Horne is a professor of English at UCL. He is co-editor of *Thorold Dickinson: A World of Film*

Pamela Hutchinson writes about film at silentlondon.co.uk

Trevor Johnston is a freelance critic

Brigitte Lacombe is a French photographer residing in New York. Her acclaimed solo exhibition 'Brigitte Lacombe: Complicities' was shown at the PHILLIPS Galleries in New York, Paris and London from June 2015 to January 2016

Tim Lucas is the editor of *Video Watchdog* and the author of *Mario Bava: All the Colors of the Dark*

Adrian Martin is a writer, film critic and teacher

Sophie Mayer's books include *Political Animals: The New Feminist Cinema*

David Robinson is the author of *Chaplin: His Life and Art*

Jonathan Romney is a freelance critic, writer and filmmaker

Laura Staab is a writer and critic

David Thomson's books include *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film* and *The Big Screen*

Kelli Weston is studying for a PhD at Birkbeck University, London

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Martin Scorsese by Brigitte Lacombe at www.brigittelacombe.com

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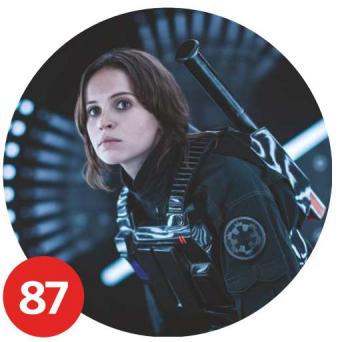

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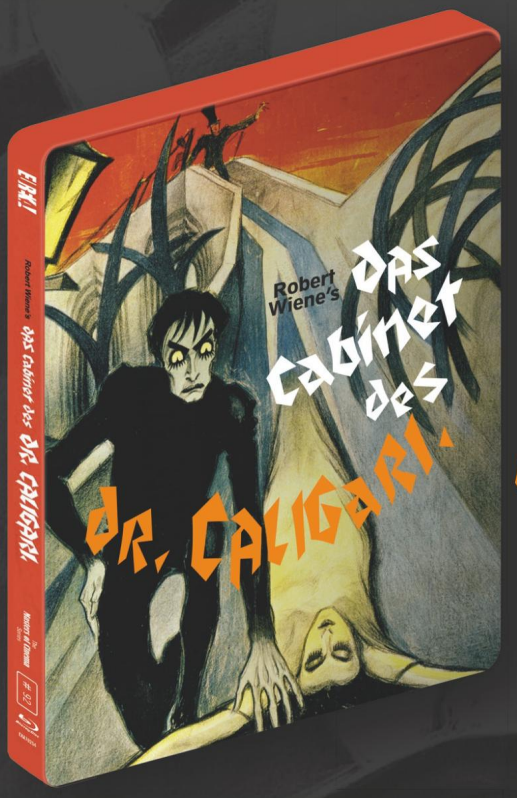

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EDITORIAL

Editor
Nick James
Deputy editor
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Features editor
James Bell
Web editor
Nick Bradshaw
Production editor
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Sub-editors
Robert Hanks
Jane Lamacraft
Researcher
Mar Diestro-Dópido
Credits supervisor
Patrick Fahy
Credits associates
Kevin Lyons
Pieter Sonke
James Piers Taylor
Design and art direction
chrisbrawndesign.com
Origination
Rhapsody
Printer
Wyndeham Group

BUSINESS

Publisher
Rob Winter
Publishing coordinator
Brenda Fernandes
Advertising consultant
Ronnie Hackston
T: 020 7957 8916
M: 07799 605 212
F: 020 7436 2327
E: ronnie.hackston@bfi.org.uk

Newsstand distribution
Comag Specialist
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Bookshop distribution
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Sight & Sound
Abacus e-Media
3rd Floor Chancery Exchange
10 Furnival Street, London, EC4A 1AB
T: 020 8955 7070
F: 020 8421 8244
E: sightandsound@abacusemedia.com

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Editorial Nick James

THE NOT TOO LATE SHOW

Who among the last great figures of the New American Cinema of the 1970s is still working at the top of the game? That question raises others, such as 'what game?' and 'what do you mean by the top?' But whatever your measure, this is a generation of filmmakers that has mostly endured.

Of the 15 directors listed in Peter Biskind's *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* (1998) as central to the movement, nine are still working. Robert Altman, Hal Ashby, Michael Cimino, Bob Rafelson and Dennis Hopper are gone, while Robert Towne, primarily a screenwriter, hasn't directed since *Ask the Dust* (2005) and has had few writing credits lately. But Warren Beatty has just directed his first film in 18 years, the Howard Hughes-related romantic drama *Rules Don't Apply* (see page 44); Peter Bogdanovich made the respectfully received backstage comedy *She's Funny That Way* (2015); and George Lucas, *Star Wars* franchise sold, came up with the original story of the computer-animated musical *Strange Magic* (2014).

The more productive survivors include William Friedkin, with the psychological horror *Bug* (2006) and the Texas hitman thriller *Killer Joe* (2011); Francis Coppola with his elusive dramas *Youth Without Youth* (2007), *Tetro* (2009) and *Twixt* (2011); and Paul Schrader, whose *The Canyons* (2013), *The Dying of the Light* (2014) and black-comedy thriller *Dog Eat Dog* (2015) are engagingly curious and stimulating pictures. Biskind doesn't list Clint Eastwood – at 86, having just made *Sully*, seemingly as unstoppable as the Trump train he favours – or Brian De Palma, whose horror film *Lights Out* is due later this year.

Which leaves us with the three most famous directors on Biskind's list: Steven Spielberg, Terrence Malick and Martin Scorsese. If the definition of 'top of the game' is making films on a substantial budget regularly for Hollywood, they qualify. The prolific Spielberg, having put out *Bridge of Spies* and *The BFG* in quick succession, is in post-production on *Ready Player One* and pre-production with *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*. Malick remains the blue-eyed boy of stupendous magic-hour cinematography (by Emmanuel Lubezki) and of a certain cadre of critics, though others detect banality in his most recent films, *Knight of Cups* and *Voyage of Time* (the soon-to-arrive *Weightless*, however, is apparently a "shot of adrenaline", so that may mark a change).

But we're not here for Spielberg or Malick. This issue is a Martin Scorsese special, dedicated to a man with an all-encompassing passion for his medium, the filmmakers' filmmaker. No one much wants to be written about as a veteran, but we can suggest with some confidence that Scorsese has made more movies than he will come to make. So it's fair to describe him as being in his late period.

This issue is a Martin Scorsese special, dedicated to a man with an all-encompassing passion for his medium, the filmmakers' filmmaker

The release of *Silence* sees him proselytising for a very personal film that has occupied him for many years (he was generous with his time for us, see page 16). That the film has divided opinion is hardly surprising, given that it's about Jesuit priests, apostasy and an oppressed Christian community in 17th-century Japan. On the surface it's one of Scorsese's least stylistically elaborate films, shot very classically, but I think it also has traces of 'late style'.

The concept of late style comes from a Theodor Adorno essay on Beethoven, and was developed by Edward Said in his unfinished book *On Late Style*. In its most extreme form, as Said has it, "the artist... fully in command of his medium... abandons communication with the established social order... and achieves a contradictory... relationship with it". It would be absurd to bind Scorsese to the notion of abandoning communication, but *Silence* resonates with some phrases Said uses about other works.

In the final chapter of his book, Said refers to "a new sense of private striving and instability" in late Beethoven, and talks of the prerogative of late style, apropos the poet Cavafy, "to render disenchantment and pleasure without resolving the contradictions between them". There is surely a link to the adult contemplation of extreme moral positions, shaded not to favour one point of view too much, that infuses *Silence*.

Said, though, is mostly concerned with works much more exclusive of, and bitter about, the world than any yet created by Scorsese, whose allegiance to representing worldly phenomena persists. He is still at the top of his game. What we on this magazine would like is at least another ten features from him. After all, compared to Eastwood, he's a stripling.

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2017 PREVIEW

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Timothy Spall in British director Sally Potter's comedy-turned-tragedy *The Party*

The real world may be a scary place, but perhaps our list of the cinematic highlights of 2017 will give you some hope to cling to

By Isabel Stevens

There are plenty of reasons to take refuge in the dark in the opening months of 2017 – not least, the fact that many of the most acclaimed films of 2016 will finally be hitting cinemas around the UK, including those that you have read about in *Sight & Sound*'s festival reports and in our films of the year poll: *Toni Erdmann*, *Moonlight*, *Elle*, Kelly Reichardt's *Certain Women* (accompanied by a Reichardt retrospective at BFI Southbank in London in March), *20th Century Women* and many more.

Arthouse excitements

There are homegrown films to look forward to as well, above all Terence Davies's portrait of American poet Emily Dickinson *A Quiet Passion*. Period drama gets claustrophobic in both Ben Wheatley's 1970s warehouse shootout comedy *Free Fire* and William Oldroyd's Victorian chamber drama about a young woman stifled in a loveless arranged marriage, *Lady Macbeth* (there are whispers that theatre director and first-time filmmaker Oldroyd is now being courted by a big sci-fi franchise). Hope Dickson Leach, with her debut feature *The Levelling*, about a farming family in crisis, proves another talent to watch, as do American documentarian-turned fiction filmmaker Anna Rose Holmer and the star of her remarkable beguiling debut *The Fits*, Royalty Hightower.

Sally Potter's eighth feature *The Party* (a comedy turned tragedy that "starts as a celebration and ends with blood on the floor") will be in the Berlinale's competition. It joins Aki Kaurismäki's Helsinki-set drama about a Finnish salesman and Syrian refugee *The Other Side of Hope* and Agnieszka Holland's *Spoor*, which she described to *S&S* in April last year as an "anarchist feminist ecological black comedy". Meanwhile Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me by Your Name* and Gillian Robespierre's *Landline* are highlights in the Sundance line-up.

In the multiplex

On the multiplex front, we're doubtful but ever hopeful that *Wonder Woman* can save the superhero extravaganza. The reboots and sequels frenzy continues with Denis Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2049*; Ridley Scott's *Alien: Covenant*, the sequel to his Alien prequel *Prometheus*; and even a resurrection of *Baywatch*. Will *Beauty and the Beast 3D*, Disney's next live-action remake of one of its own titles, win as many admirers as 2016's job on *The Jungle Book*? Another imminent live-action takeover is Dreamworks's reworking of cyberpunk anime classic *Ghost in the Shell*, with Scarlett Johansson controversially taking the role of the hacker-hunting Japanese cyborg.

Films, animated

Not everyone is abandoning animation, though; Pixar is flouting Trump's anti-Mexican agenda and looking over the US border for its next tale *Coco*, set during the Day of the Dead. While the other juggernauts don't look particularly enticing (*My Little Pony* is the only original entry in a long list of sequels: *Paddington 2*, *Despicable Me 3*, *Cars 3*, *The Lego Batman Movie*...), on the

opposite end of the commercial scale, 2017 will see the release of two great debut animated features: the Swiss director Claude Barras's stop-motion tale about childhood tragedy *My Life as a Courgette*, and Dutch-British animator Michaël Dudok de Wit's castaway fantasy *The Red Turtle*.

The genre girls

Feminist genre films are surfacing with a vengeance, and with subversive surprises in tow: there's French director Julia Ducournau's grisly sister saga *Raw* (with cannibalism!), Alice Lowe's serial killer rampage *Prevenge* (with a pregnant lady killer!) and Anna Biller's sumptuous 35mm ode to vintage horror *The Love Witch* (with a sorceress who terminates her lovers!).

The wish-list

On our wish-list of films we hope will surface are two long-gestating projects – Lucrecia Martel's historical epic *Zama* and Andrei Ujica's archive opus about the Beatles, which pieces together a weekend the band spent in New York in August 1965. Could they both finally be on the cards for Cannes in May? It looks like Claire Denis's English-language sci-fi *High Life* won't be ready in time (it's only shooting this spring), but what about Clio Barnard and her family dispute drama *Dark River*? Or the second feature from Saudi Arabia's Haifaa Al Mansour, the Mary Shelley romance *A Storm in the Stars*? Or Lynne Ramsay's drama about a war veteran who rescues trafficked women from the sex trade *You Were Never Really Here*? Other British films we suspect may be nearing completion include Andrew Haigh's *Lean on Pete*, Sophie Fiennes's Grace Jones documentary and Andrew Kötting's *Lek and the Dogs*, which uses archive film to tell the true story of a four-year-old boy in Moscow adopted by a pack of wild dogs.

Isabelle Huppert's reign may continue further into 2017 (after the release of *Elle*) as she reunites with Michael Haneke in *Happy End* (a strong Cannes contender), and teams with French director Serge Bozon on his black comedy *Mrs Hyde*, in which she plays a shy physics teacher transformed after being struck by lightning. If her collaboration with prolific South Korean director Hong Sangsoo appears too, that could make it a trio. Among the auteurs we hope are on Cannes artistic director Thierry Fremaux's speed-dial are Sofia Coppola, whose remake of the 1971 shocker *The Beguiled* is slated for a summer release; Agnès Varda, whose photographic road trip *Visage Visage* is due; and Carlos Reygadas, who describes his *Where Life Begins* as "a cowboy story".

From Hollywood

Kathryn Bigelow's next film, a crime drama starring John Boyega and funded by Megan Ellison's Annapurna Pictures, is currently in production as *Untitled Detroit Project* but should be a safe bet for 2017 and the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Detroit riots. Another Hollywood project looking back in history is Guillermo del Toro's *The Shape of Water*, a Cold War romance with a twist: Michael Shannon stars in what sounds like a gender-swapped *Little Mermaid* tale, about "an amphibious man who forms a bond with a mortal woman" (played by Sally Hawkins). Bong Joonho, sticking with fantasy after *Snowpiercer*, should return with *Okja*, about a young girl trying to save her best friend, a genetically manufactured giant pig, from an evil multinational. 2017 is the year Christopher Nolan leaves the franchises behind and reveals his 65mm World War II drama *Dunkirk*. In what would be a coup for celluloid, there are rumours that it may open in 70mm Imax and 35mm cinemas two days in advance.

Elisabeth Moss as detective Robin Griffin in the second series of Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake*

On the box

Undoubtedly the most anticipated auteur TV series of the year is David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (tune in in April?), with Jane Campion's second season of her elliptical detective series *Top of the Lake* hot on its heels. A small-screen adaptation of Neil Gaiman's fantasy novel *American Gods*, starring beloved small-screen stars Gillian Anderson and Ian McShane, will likely be anything but small. A visit to Gilead in the forthcoming adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* feels very topical given Trump's appointments to the White House top brass. *Top of the Lake*'s Elisabeth Moss stars as the concubine handmaid Offred. Lena Dunham's *Girls* takes a bow with its sixth season, while Bafta-winning Michaela Coel's comedy *Chewing Gum* is back for a second season on E4. BBC productions include the eight-part drama *Taboo* – a macabre 19th-century tale about a presumed dead adventurer returning home, starring and co-created by Tom Hardy, which airs in January – and a new Jimmy McGovern series, *Broken*. And, so as not to be outdone by *The Crown*, the BBC also has *Charles III* in the works – a future-history drama adapted from Mike Bartlett's acclaimed play, imagining Prince Charles's ascension to the throne. A new TV showcase, BFI & Radio Times Television Festival, takes place at BFI Southbank in London (7-9 April) and will no doubt highlight many more new series as well as hosting screenings of archive shows. Meanwhile, in March HOME in Manchester has its own season 'Forgotten TV Drama', uncovering lost British classics.

Last but not least

If all that doesn't sound adventurous enough for you, consider Todd Haynes's *Wonderstruck*, starring Julianne Moore and Michelle Williams, half of which Haynes has shot in the style of a silent film; and Bruno Dumont's *Jeannette*, a musical about Joan of Arc's childhood. And is it finally time for Ilya Khrzhanovsky to unveil *Dau*, the ultra-epic for which he recreated a mid-20th-century Soviet research institute in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, populated it with volunteers and filmed them for over two years? Let's hope so.

Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*

Michaël Dudok de Wit's *The Red Turtle*

LIFTING THE VEIL

A veil represents both the purity of the chaste bride and the promise of her sexuality – and is a symbol that has always been ripe for subversion

By Hannah McGill

The wedding veil is both a symbol of pristine female modesty, and a magnifier of erotic allure. Like the Vaseline once smeared on camera lenses, it smudges detail, masks flaws and connotes protected untouchability; like a stripper's fans and feathers, it provokes voyeuristic anticipation by offering hints of the goods below. The lifting of the veil during the ceremony unsubtly foreshadows the rupture of the hymen that is presumed to be forthcoming. But it is also theatrical, lifting a curtain on the bride's face as an erotic spectacle, and introducing her to an audience in her new role as a wife. The veil, along with other traditions of the Western Christian white wedding, is a recent adoption, popularised in Victorian times and reinforced in ensuing decades via etiquette guides, advertising and the powerful influence of cinema. A resurgence of interest in elaborate, formal and ritualised white weddings in recent decades has seen their traditions embraced far beyond Christian churches. The undimmed popularity of a wedding veil as a signifier of a woman's transition is a noteworthy counterpoint to the swelling controversy over the everyday veiling of women within other religious traditions.

Veiled brides as dewy embodiments of peak femininity abound on film, from Louise Brooks in *Pandora's Box* (1929) and Audrey Hepburn in *Funny Face* (1957), to the multiple brides played by Julia Roberts, Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz and Kate Hudson. But so forceful is the iconography of the woman delivered up in white wrapping – at once sacrosanct and highly sexual; socially prized and personally disempowered; exiting her independence and entering her wifehood – that it has been subverted at least as much as it has been idealised. Indeed, movie wedding looks have historically proved capable of sustaining romantic associations despite highly ambiguous prospects for the fictional marriages in which they feature. Among the most copied wedding outfits of the 1930s were Claudette Colbert's gauze-shrouded look in *It Happened One Night* (1934), and Vivien Leigh's frou-frou ensemble from *Gone with the Wind* (1939) – both assembled for marriages with distinctly cynical intentions.

The veil itself, meanwhile, attains a surreal power when separated from the context of the happily completed wedding. The hunger to marry for its own sake – now a lucrative source of reality TV concepts – was roundly spoofed as early as 1925, when *Seven Chances* saw Buster Keaton fiercely pursued by a gaggle of veiled would-be brides. Even less keen is Henry Wilcoxon's Richard Lionheart in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Crusades* (1935), whose ambivalence about his bride Berengaria is affirmed when he fails to show up for their wedding; when she has her veil delivered to him as a symbol of their union, he uses it to wrap his horse's wounded leg.

(Clockwise from top left) *Pandora's Box*, *Funny Face*, *Melancholia* and *At Five in the Afternoon*

Another rejected bride, Miss Havisham (Martita Hunt) in David Lean's *Great Expectations* (1946), hangs on to her veil; decades after her abandonment, it mimics the spiders' webs gathered on her uneaten wedding breakfast, suggesting the concurrent cobwebbing of her personality and sexuality. The anti-wedding that closes *The Graduate* (1967) – Benjamin (Dustin Hoffman) and Elaine (Katharine Ross) stuck for words on the bus carrying them away from her curtailed wedding – gains added satirical darkness from the veil still worn by the slightly dishevelled Elaine, its associations of blissful sexual union pointing up the awkward realities still to be dealt with between the couple. Facing a somewhat more decided future is Kirsten Dunst's character in *Melancholia* (2011), Justine, whose initial appearance as an iconically radiant veiled bride becomes ironic once it becomes clear that both her marriage and the entire planet are hopelessly doomed.

Veils worn for religious reasons, meanwhile, are ever more potent symbols, whether worn by Muslim women or Catholic nuns, and whether regarded as impediments to autonomy or personal assertions of identity. The young Afghan protagonist of Samira Makhmalbaf's *At Five in the Afternoon* (2003) veils herself as required, but enacts her own form of rebellion by buying and wearing white high-heeled party shoes under her robes. Promoting the film at the time of its release, Makhmalbaf was keen to emphasise that she recognised the complexity of the veil as a symbol. "Before, I thought of the Afghan women as having closed minds – that veiling their face also had veiled their desire," she told the *Independent*'s Fiona Morrow in 2003. "But when I arrived, I realised that the veil is the symbol of Afghan women. The symbol of all her power and her feelings of responsibility came from that."

The young Afghan protagonist of 'At Five in the Afternoon' veils herself, but wears high-heeled party shoes under her robes

The veil as a negotiation with one's responsibilities is an idea pursued in *American Pastoral* (2016), Ewan McGregor's film of Philip Roth's novel, in which a young woman rewards the love of her all-American family by bombing a post office and disappearing. Tracking her down at last, her father Swede (McGregor) finds Merry (Dakota Fanning) living in squalor and wearing a veil to mark her affiliation to the Jain faith. This form of veil – the *ghoonghat* – is worn not for modesty, but to minimise the wearer's impact on their environment. Merry is atoning for American destructiveness by avoiding even the possibility of breathing in a living thing. But the veil is also symbolic of unresolved sexual issues between father and daughter: implicitly, if Merry cannot wed her father, she will be a bride of nothing. In the course of their conversation, Swede persuades Merry to remove the covering, but this is no joyous affirmation of her femininity: the veil turns out to mask missing and rotten teeth, the physical evidence of Merry's rejection of American values and thus of Swede's failure as a parent.

BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (3)/RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE (1)/REX FEATURES (1)

FESTIVAL

THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' TO IT

A strong silent cinema strand at Bristol's Slapstick Festival showcases the enduring appeal of the convention-busting flapper

By Pamela Hutchinson

Clara Bow was in the first flush of stardom when she made *Kid Boots* with Eddie Cantor in 1926. Her reputation as a flirt was still considered titillating rather than sordid and when the big-budget adaptation of Cantor's hit Broadway musical was released, rumours flew about a romance on set, and the public thronged to see the sexual tension on screen.

But audiences leaning forward to enjoy the spark between the two stars were deluded if they thought they were whispering sweet nothings to each other. Bow would not have dreamed of 'vamping' a married man. Instead, barely three years into her Hollywood career, Bow was coaching Broadway veteran Cantor on his debut film performance. The gist was "be yourself", or as Cantor recalled: "While the camera ground away and caught all her pretty frowns, she was really saying, 'Eddie, ya doin' fine! Just flash them banjo eyes and there ain't nothin' to it!'"

Kid Boots screens at the Slapstick Festival in Bristol (18-22 January), part of an especially strong silent cinema strand in its annual celebration of visual comedy. In fact, the festival is steadily increasing its emphasis on female silent comics, led this year by a trio of films featuring flappers at their funniest. It doesn't take anything away from Cantor's long and successful career to say that in 1926, Bow knew better how to put over a laugh on screen than he did. And while the history of silent comedy is often portrayed as a shooting match between male actor-writer-directors, the women in those films more than hold their own – in many cases they are the main event.

Not only that, but the liberated, lovable flapper type represented a bewildering strand of modern life, a token of the new, more sexually permissive age – the complications

Girl and a gun: Annette Benson in *Shooting Stars*

of which could flummox a young movie hero and amuse audiences. This idea is taken to its furthest conclusion at the festival with the knockabout Hal Roach short *What Is the World Coming to?* (1926), set in a dystopian future in which women wear the trousers, and glamorous Katherine Grant is running around with her "sheikh stenographer" to the dismay of her apron-wearing husband Clyde Cook. Less fancifully, there's a serious feminist comedy on the bill, in the shape of Carl Th. Dreyer's wonderful *Master of the House* (1925), which stages a necessary domestic intervention in the household of a grizzling, tyrannical husband.

Before Bow, Hollywood's foremost flapper was Colleen Moore, who started out playing melodramatic roles, assisted by a mop of flowing ringlets and a mournful expression she later lampooned as her "Papa, what is beer?" face. In 1923, she snipped those ringlets into a sleek bob and took the lead role in an adaptation of a sexually provocative novel called *Flaming Youth*. Moore epitomised the flapper type by combining insouciant sexuality with a reassuring girl-next-door wholesomeness. Filmgoers adored her, with teenage girls across America emulating her hairstyle, and no doubt trying out her cheeky persona on their high-school boyfriends.

Rumours flew about a romance on set between Bow and Cantor, and the public thronged to see the sexual tension on screen

The Moore film showing at Slapstick is an especially intriguing one. *Why Be Good?* (1929), made on the cusp of the sound era, pairs Moore with Neil Hamilton as sweethearts whose romance stumbles because of his fusty preconceptions about flapper morality. Moore's lacerating speech, in which she condemns men who "insist on a girl being just what you want – and then you bawl her out for being it", resounds as refreshingly progressive. Of course, it also reinforces Hollywood's insistence on its heroines being good girls underneath – but it's hard to expect anything else from the impish Moore.

From this side of the pond, Anthony Asquith's *Shooting Stars* (1928) features Annette Benson as a sugary blonde movie star who, contrary to her media image, is really a good-time girl – a sexy brunette who is sleeping with a lusty slapstick comic behind the back of her screen-hero hubby. Tragedy looms, but Benson's Mae Feather is wickedly watchable. Likewise a much earlier film from Sweden, also showing at the festival, *Thomas Graal's Best Film* (Mauritz Stiller, 1917) shows a lackadaisical screenwriter (Victor Sjöström) scoring a hit with a film that casts his cute secretary (Karin Molander) as a distressed damsel in need of his masculine rescue. The truth, that she is really a free-spirited heiress in search of adventure, is assumed to be less palatable to movie audiences. The Roaring Twenties would soon see to that.

The Slapstick Festival is held at various venues in Bristol from 18-22 January. For information, see www.slapstick.org.uk

Colleen Moore

Mirror, mirror: Clara Bow and Eddie Cantor in *Kid Boots* (1926)

BROADCAST NEWS

Chain gang: Jacey's early publicity made great play of its in-house film unit (above) while the scrapbook (opposite) records key moments in the chain's history

A recently discovered scrapbook tells the intriguing tale of the rise and fall of the Jacey cinema chain, purveyor of newsreels and sex films

By Ian Francis

Oscar Deutsch, the founder of the Odeon chain, wasn't the only cinema entrepreneur to emerge from Birmingham's Jewish community early in the last century. Born in 1889, Joseph Cohen was the son of a greengrocer and – like other local luminaries, including Deutsch, critic Iris Barry and producer Michael Balcon – first found a taste for moving pictures at Waller Jeffs's Curzon Hall shows. After training as a lawyer and backed up by a growing property empire, Cohen moved into film exhibition in the 1920s and in 1932 opened the News Theatre on Birmingham's High St, the first in a small chain of UK-wide newsreel theatres, including sites in London, Bristol, Brighton, Manchester, Liverpool and Edinburgh.

A scrapbook recently came to light charting the rise and fall of this trailblazing but now largely forgotten operation. Compiled at first by Cohen's wife Doris, this voluminous tome gathers yellowing press cuttings and monochrome interiors, trade adverts and glossy premiere invitations, spanning half a century during which British film exhibition changed beyond recognition. Adopting the owner's initials for the company name, Jacey's early publicity made great play of its in-house film unit, led by Joseph's son George, a tactic inspired by the local actualities which Jeffs commissioned and screened during the 1900s. One photograph shows George perched beside the camera outside the Tatler, Jacey's second Birmingham site, which was handily located behind New Street station so that passengers could wander across the tracks to get their fix of news or cartoons while waiting for a train.

During the 1950s this business model began to crumble in the face of television. By that point George was responsible for managing the chain and, emboldened by the example of his friend Kenneth Rive at Gala Films, he decided to diversify into cinemas showing continental fare. Coinciding with the arrival in the UK of affordable air travel, proper coffee, foreign food and the like, the opulence of these venues offered a contrast with the pokey functionality of the news theatres. They also capitalised on an abundant supply of international cinema which the major chains wouldn't touch, covering a wide spectrum from arthouse prestige to low-rent exploitation. (And plenty more besides: William Burroughs's collaborator Antony Balch programmed the Piccadilly Jacey for a time, turning it into a bastion of experimentalism.) For a brief, heady period this seemed to be the future of cinema, and reading through the scrapbook you can sense the Cohens' enthusiasm for gala openings and Cannes trips. A Pathé clip on YouTube records French actress Martine Carol's arrival in Birmingham to inaugurate the flagship Cinephone, bringing a dose of glamour hitherto undreamt of in the provinces.

During the 1940s many of Jacey's colourful Birmingham hoardings had been painted by Andre Drucker, an artist who arrived from Bohemia shortly before war broke out. Eventually Drucker took on management of the Cinephone café, covering the walls with his own artwork and sowing the seeds for what would become a chain of Viennese-inspired cafés still spanning the country today. Interviewed some time later, he talked fondly of that early 60s period: the passionate cinephiles, the midnight matinees and 3am breakfasts. It soon became apparent, however, that these cinemas would not be able to pay their way on Bergman and Godard alone. Sex had always been an important component in the marketing of the continentals, but was increasingly integral as naturist titles and soft porn began to dominate the programming.

It became apparent these cinemas would not be able to pay their way on Bergman and Godard alone – sex was increasingly integral

A brief 1964 ad campaign in the *Evening Standard* for some of the London venues made clear Jacey's ambivalence about this turn of events. Offering outlandishly cheap tickets for screenings of *My Bare Lady*, the advert challenged punters thus: "Why pay more?... As long as indifferent sexy films are box office they will abound. Why not more support for good pictures?" Inevitably the campaign brought customers flocking, for the wrong kind of pictures. Drucker recalled a change in the Cinephone's clientele around this time, leading to an increase in "smooching in the alcoves... which of course put off the more serious cinema-goers". Local critic Arthur Steele was a loyal Cinephone supporter, and tracked its demise blow by blow in the *Evening Mail*. "Is 'good cinema' lost on Midlanders?" moaned one headline, and the final page of the Jacey scrapbook is given over to his 1977 epitaph for the Cohens' "brave venture" (presaging the company's sale shortly afterwards).

This slide from noble intentions to barrel-scraping has been ruefully recorded elsewhere. In his recent memoir Elvis Costello rhapsodises about gorging himself on cartoons at the Liverpool Jacey as a child; "a perfect place" which "later mutated into an X-rated cinema". Jonathan Coe's young lovers in his novel *The Rotters' Club* spot the Tatler (by then renamed as a Jacey) on their way through Birmingham in 1974: "Customers were this week being offered a choice between Girls Led Astray, When Girls Undress and Love Play Swedish Style." It should be noted that the same venue, now the Electric, survives today on less tawdry fare. One might also argue that, in their emphasis on decor, refreshments and audience experience, the Cohens were decades ahead of the boutique cinema boom. S

With thanks to Mike Simkin and John Neville Cohen. More information can be found at www.jncohen.net, while the forthcoming 'Routledge Companion to British Cinema History' includes a chapter by Adrian Smith on Jacey in the 1960s. In February, the Electric Cinema will unveil a new Civic Society plaque celebrating more than a century of screening films.

ILLUSTRATION BY ARTHUR GHIVERTON

17 FOR '17

Not everything's perfect in cinema, so as we survey the year ahead, it's time to dream up a list of all the ways we could make it even better

By Mark Cousins

A new year, a new movie year. Cinema continues to be a pleasure, a fount, a consolation, but most of us who love it know it could be better. How? Let's imagine. Let's get out a crystal ball and look at what 2017 will, or could, be. Let's say 17 things:

1 Firstly, there's good stuff in the pipeline. This year we'll see new films from Ruben Ostlund, Clio Barnard, Joachim Trier, Kathryn Bigelow, Bong Joonho, Todd Haynes, Lynne Ramsay, Bruno Dumont, Paul Thomas Anderson, Carlos Reygadas, Lucrecia Martel, Danny Boyle, Yorgos Lanthimos and Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy, to name but 14. That's enough to keep us sane.

2 But there's much in film production that could be improved. Think of China's mainstream cinema – the *dapian*, or blockbuster, movies. They're still trying too hard to be like Hollywood. As India shows, the main melody of a movie industry doesn't have to be American. China needs more of its own ideas about what entertainment cinema means.

3 Also in production, but closer to home, could Scotland announce plans this year for a proper film studio?

4 Moving on to politics, two proposals that relate to the biggest film-producing countries in the world. The first concerns India, which certificated 1,827 films in 2015, compared with the 462 that were released in the US. The ongoing saffronisation of the country's culture under the influence of the right-wing BJP government is a concern. The recent directive to play the national anthem at all movie screenings was bullying, and the country's Central Board of Film Certification should be left alone to do its job, and liberalise. This great country's filmmakers are far too restricted in what they can show on screen.

5 On 20 January, the day of Donald Trump's inauguration, I would encourage movie-goers around the world to protest against his ideas, and the fact that they will have a global impact, by boycotting America cinema.

6 Also on the subject of movie-going: in 2017, could the sellers of sweets and crisps devise non-rustle wrappers so that the kids and the wee woman behind me can have their treats every two minutes without me wanting to yell at them?

7 And – I know this is impossible because they bring in revenue – but can all movie houses be ad-free, like the ICA in London? There's no advertising in a church or mosque before the prayers.

8 Of course, many people see movies in places other than cinemas, so here's an idea for them: could Film4 or BBC4 in the UK, at 8pm every Tuesday and Thursday, have a Movie Retrospective? Start with Fassbinder or the brilliant Japanese actor and director Tanaka Kinuyo, who was in some of the greatest films ever made and was one of Japan's first female filmmakers. And could they announce them well in advance, and publicise them?

Could the sellers of sweets devise non-rustle wrappers so that the kids in the cinema can have their treats without me wanting to yell?

9 And could the French company toutenkamion, which makes mobile cinemas, roll out 100 of them to go all over the world, and bring cinema to millions of people in villages? Yes, it would be expensive, but think of it as that modern political shibboleth, a Keynesian infrastructure project that would employ a lot of people and add to the mirth of nations.

10 My previous four suggestions are intended to improve movie-going and cinephilia, but fear not because I've proof that the latter is safe: in a recent article *La La Land* director Damien Chazelle wrote that his favourite musicals included Rouben Mamoulian's *Love Me Tonight* (1932), Djibril Diop Mambéty's *Touki Bouki* (1973) and Claire Denis's *Beau Travail* (1999). I could have kissed his feet. If people making big films are watching movies like those, and thinking about cinema like that, then the cinephile religion is safe.

11 Moving on to learning about film, here's a plea: film schools in Nigeria, could you up your game a bit? Your country makes more films than any apart from India, and I know there have been advances in quality in recent years, but too many of them do not seem to care much about film language. Gaston Kaboré's film institute in Burkina Faso, Imagine, would provide a great model for Nigeria to work from.

12 Back here in the UK, would it be possible, in 2017, to begin plans so that all new teacher trainees get a voluntary one-year free film education? I know this would cost a fair bit, but film can enhance every part of the curriculum. Most teachers still have not benefited from a movie education.

13 Let's move on to a crisis area, film restoration. Thousands of key works from film history are decaying. Great foundations and experts in America, Italy, India and elsewhere are doing their damnedest to rescue them, but we need a global plan. What if 0.1 per cent of the annual box office was donated to restoration? If about six billion movie tickets are sold each year, and even if the average ticket price is only $1, that would create a fund of $6 million. It could be applied to by any country.

14 Awards. Can we have an honorary Oscar for Sharmila Tagore, please, who is to Indian cinema what Elizabeth Taylor was to American cinema? And can we completely rethink the annual condescension which is the single Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film?

15 And, while we're on the subject, could the wording of some of the prizes be modified from "achievement in" to "innovation in"?

16 Finally, could I have a gin martini with Paul Thomas Anderson? Yamashiro, the pagoda in the Hollywood hills would be fine as the venue. I saw him in a restaurant recently and wasn't brave enough to ask.

17 This one's for you. Tell me your #moviehopesfor2017 on Twitter (@SightSoundmag or @markcousinsfilm) or elsewhere.

ILLUSTRATION BY NATE KITCH

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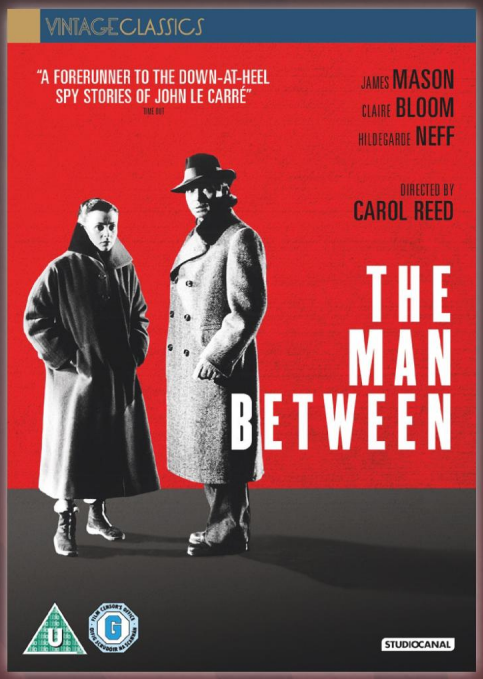

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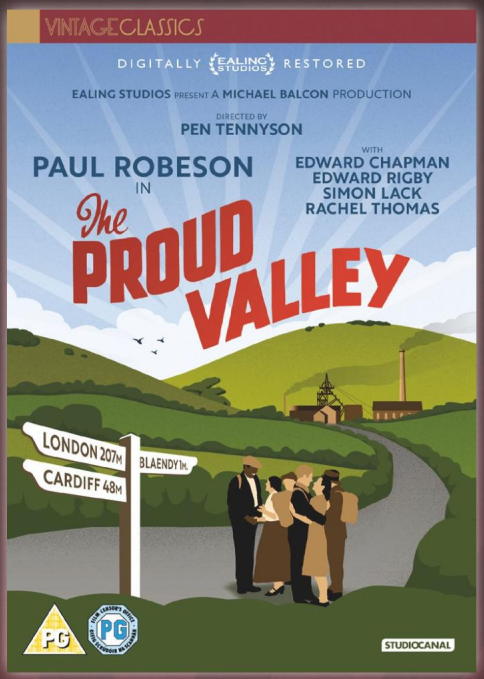

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STUDIOCANAL

DEVELOPMENT TALE

T2: TRAINSPOTTING

The boys are back in town: Ewen Bremner, Ewan McGregor, Jonny Lee Miller and Robert Carlyle in Danny Boyle's *T2: Trainspotting*

A creative summit in Edinburgh in 2014 was the shot in the arm the *Trainspotting* crew needed to rescue the sequel after years in limbo

By Charles Gant

Ever since the release of director Danny Boyle and screenwriter John Hodge's *Trainspotting* in February 1996, fans and stakeholders have pondered the notion of a sequel. As the film's producer Andrew Macdonald explains, "I guess it was pretty clear 20 years ago that people just loved the characters, and people wanted to know what would happen to them."

But, as Hodge says, talk is not the same as action. "Conversations are cheap, aren't they? All the time you think, 'It would be nice to make a film about this, it would be nice to make a film about that.' 'It would be nice to make a sequel to *Trainspotting*' was really just another one of those conversations one has with anyone that you work with.

"Then you start talking about the difficulties of it. You start thinking, 'Well, you couldn't do it without that cast.' Just in pure practical terms, to get those four actors all available at the same time, and all wanting to do it. There has to be something in it for them – not just money, but character-wise – for them to want to return to that territory, and it's got to work creatively for Danny as well. The conversations inevitably started dwelling on the obstacles. It's not surprising that it never got made until now."

In fact, the notion of a sequel to *Trainspotting* did get as far as a screenplay – commissioned by Macdonald and written by Hodge – loosely based on *Porno*, Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* book sequel, which was published in August 2002.

"We didn't take it anywhere, and we just dumped it," Hodge says. "If I look back, the reason was it was neither close enough to *Trainspotting* to be what happened the next day, or a year later – everyone the same age and the same vibe. Nor was it sufficiently down the line as we are now to feel, OK, there's a whole lifetime gone by. So it fell rather uncomfortably between those two. In other words, it wasn't any good."

Macdonald adds, "We commissioned a screenplay in the hope that it would galvanise interest from Danny and the cast. We never got as far as the cast. Danny didn't think it was the right time to make it. Like lots of projects, it was put in a bottom drawer for a few years – or a decade in this case."

One additional challenge at that time was the falling out between Boyle and actor Ewan McGregor over his casting of *The Beach* (2000): the *Trainspotting* star thought he'd been promised the lead role, but it went instead to Leonardo DiCaprio. McGregor was wounded, and angry over the way the matter was handled, and the relationship was tarnished for more than a decade.

Meanwhile, although the topic of a *Trainspotting* sequel never went away, Hodge needed firmer ground before trying again. "I was reluctant to invest the time and emotion in writing another script until there was some sense of the actors really being on board," he says.

Boyle did eventually speak to the four main actors, who all confirmed that they were interested in revisiting the characters. He then arranged for a creative summit in Edinburgh in late spring 2014, with Hodge, Macdonald and author Welsh. "Irvine was great," says Hodge. "He introduced us to various people who he thought would fire our imagination about certain aspects of life in Edinburgh. And just being there, and going around locations we'd used or might use, or just places, was very helpful, and the time together. That made it all seem more of a real prospect to me."

Also attending the session in Edinburgh was Boyle's new producer partner Christian Colson. After making six films and producing a seventh (*28 Weeks Later*) with Macdonald, the director then made four with Colson (*Slumdog Millionaire*, *127 Hours*, *Trance*, *Steve Jobs*). Now Macdonald would be sharing producer credit on *T2: Trainspotting* with Boyle and Colson – and

There has to be something in it for the actors – not just money, but character-wise – for them to want to return to the territory

also Bernie Bellew, the former line producer who would lead on the actual production logistics.

If Macdonald feels the sting of losing his star director to another man, he's not showing it. "It is actually very useful to have somebody looking in from the outside, slightly," he says regarding Colson's creative input. "It reminds you that you are trying to make something fresh all the time."

While the original film is slightly vague about period – the novel is set in the late 1980s, and the film was shot in 1995 – *T2* is set unambiguously in the present. "In the first film, they're all basically junkies, and they never really went outside, so there's a lot of debate over that," says Macdonald. "But the new film is absolutely set today. It's clearly meant to feel the reality of these characters in a modern Scotland, a modern Britain. There are many more exteriors, and the feeling that you're in a modern world."

Hodge concurs that this contemporary reality includes present-day topics such as gentrification and austerity. "And the mass movement of people across Europe is a part of our lives as well, and the insecurity of modern work. It's not a film about migration, or insecurity of modern work, or gentrification, it's a film about these characters, but that's the world that they inhabit."

While Welsh's *Porno* provided helpful clues to where the characters are now – Begbie has been in prison, Renton is returning from Amsterdam, Spud is pretty much where he's always been and Sick Boy is running a pub – Hodge rejected the book's storyline about making a porn film. For the screenwriter, the story presented the big challenge.

"The characters are fine," says Hodge. "Once they get talking, no problem. I can write them forever. It's the practical thing of: what's going to happen, how are events going to play out? That was the challenge. And we were conscious of the fact that you need a bit of story, but not too much, because they're not those kind of people. They are chaotic people, and stuff happens and stuff doesn't happen. We all felt that the structure we were aspiring to would be not too dissimilar to the first film, in the sense that there's a progression of events, but it's not a tightly wound thriller."

Hodge and the team continued to develop the screenplay in 2015, and the principal actors agreed terms. The challenge now was to find a window when all four male leads – and Kelly Macdonald – would be available. Jonny Lee Miller and Robert Carlyle's commitments to their recurring US TV shows – *Elementary* (2012-) and *Once upon a Time* (2011-) – were the chief obstacles, but they were eventually both available for eight weeks in the summer of 2016.

"We were very daunted," says Macdonald. "It's very scary. People like the original film, and you don't want them not to embrace this as well. I'm excited, but I'm nervous. It went amazingly smoothly, which is reflected in how quickly the film has been turned around. We finished shooting in August, and it's going to be in the cinemas in January. I think that when films take a long time, there's normally a reason. This was a very emotional and enjoyable experience."

i ***T2: Trainspotting*** **is released in UK cinemas on 27 January and will be reviewed in our next issue**

THE NUMBERS
REVIEW OF THE YEAR

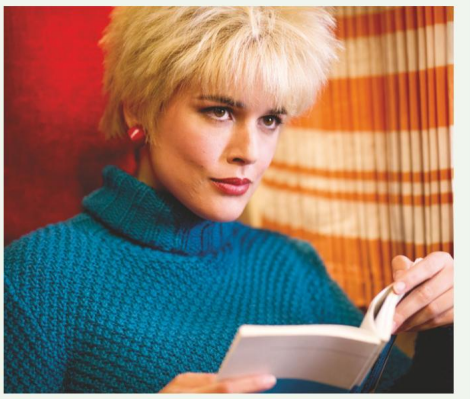
By Charles Gant

After the blockbuster surge of 2015 – powered by giant hits such as *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, *Spectre* and *Jurassic World* – few were expecting 2016 to measure up at the box office. And, indeed, as this edition went to press, the year had yet to deliver a single £50 million hit in the UK – *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* will presumably be the first. The surprising fact, in this case, is that the paucity of giant films has had zero impact, with a better spread of wealth pushing 2016 to what will almost certainly be bigger box office than 2015, and probably comparable admissions (number of tickets sold).

In the arthouse space, it's been a rather different story, at least in terms of a spread of titles throughout the calendar year. Our English-language top 10 for 2016 is overwhelmingly dominated by films released in January or early February for awards consideration, with only *Hail, Caesar!*, *Eye in the Sky* and *Arrival* released in the ten months since the Bafta Film Awards ceremony. Cinema bookers complained again of a dearth of commercially appealing product in the summer, and many venues appeared fated to miss their financial targets this year.

Salvation arrived in the autumn courtesy of two surprise hits – *My Scientology Movie* (£1.09 million) and especially *I, Daniel Blake* (£3.05 million) – which brought audiences flocking back to indie cinemas. For example, the two titles were among the top three performers for 2016 at key venues Bristol Watershed and Manchester HOME.

In foreign-language, happily, some ground was made up after the rather dismal 2015, which failed to produce a single non-Bollywood £1 million hit. The bright spot was Pedro Almodóvar's admired *Julieta*, which ended its run on a respectable £1.34 million – down from his box-office heights (*Volver*, £2.88 million), but well up on his previous effort (*I'm So Excited!*, £870,000).



Bright spot: Adriana Ugarte in *Julieta*

Two further films – *Victoria* and *Son of Saul* – cracked £500,000, although it should be noted that the former contains a majority of English-language dialogue. Japanese anime *Your Name* had reached £373,000 at press time, with 78 per cent of that figure earned from the subtitled version (the rest in dubbed). Our foreign-language chart excludes not just Bollywood titles (top for the year was *Sultan*, with £1.79 million), but also a number of films targeting the UK's large Polish population – *Pitbull: Tough Women* stood at £776,000 at press time, and its predecessor *Pitbull: Public Order* got to £544,000. These 18-certificate action films played exclusively in multiplex cinemas.

In documentary, the year's notable hits relied on the star power of their subjects – or rather the presenter talent in the case of Louis Theroux and *My Scientology Movie*. *The Beatles: Eight Days a Week – The Touring Years* pipped the Theroux film at the box office with £1.18 million, and Oasis doc *Supersonic* achieved a robust £755,000. Andrew Dominik's Nick Cave film *One More Time with Feeling* – initially intended for one-night-only play the day before the release of new album *Skeleton Tree*, but then given an extended life – came fourth in documentary, with £440,000.

FOREIGN-LANGUAGE ARTHOUSE FILMS AT UK BOX OFFICE 2016

Film	Gross
Julieta	£1,338,639
Victoria	£510,793
Son of Saul	£501,024
Dheepan	£414,344
Your Name	£373,354
Mustang	£322,419
Rams	£277,875
Embrace of the Serpent	£270,442
Marguerite	£233,768
Things to Come	£232,928

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTHOUSE FILMS AT UK BOX OFFICE 2016

Film	Gross
The Revenant	£23,436,513
Arrival	£8,878,914*
The Danish Girl	£7,542,389
The Hateful Eight	£7,409,945
Spotlight	£6,367,372
The Big Short	£6,031,245
Hail, Caesar!	£5,187,114
Joy	£5,155,542
Eye in the Sky	£5,076,277
Room	£4,051,211

Grosses to December 18; *still on release

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIGITTE LACOMBE

MARTIN SCORSESE CATHOLIC TASTES

Martin Scorsese's 28-year quest to adapt 'Silence', by the great Catholic writer Endo Shusaku, has resulted in one of the director's most personal movies. Here he discusses faith, filmmaking and his fascination with the giants of Japanese cinema. By **Philip Horne**
On-set photography by **Brigitte Lacombe**

Martin Scorsese's *Silence* has an epic sweep – seething volcanoes, threatening waves, rainstorms and enveloping cloud and mist bring it closer to nature than any of his previous movies – and yet this magnificent, long-meditated film increasingly carries its Portuguese Jesuit hero, Sebastian Rodrigues (Andrew Garfield) towards confinement – in huts, bamboo cages, compounds, prison cells, palanquins, or trussed on the back of a donkey. Everything points beyond that to torture and martyrdom – by crucifixion, fire or water, or by being hung upside down for days over 'the pit'. With his colleague Francisco Garupe (Adam Driver), Rodrigues enters Japan at a moment in the 17th century when Christianity, previously tolerated and beginning to spread, has been outlawed, and thousands have been martyred or forced to apostasise, that is, publicly renounce their faith. Their mission is to find out the truth about their former teacher and confessor, Father Christovao Ferreira (Liam Neeson), the leader of the mission, whose rumoured apostasy after torture casts a shameful shadow over their order.

SLOW TRAIN COMING
Martin Scorsese secured the rights for the novel *Silence* a couple of years after he first encountered it during the making of *GoodFellas* in 1989

The film, which (like *The Age of Innocence* and *Gangs of New York*) Scorsese co-wrote with Jay Cocks, is based on the novel *Silence* (*Chinmoku*, 1966) by the great Japanese Catholic writer Endo Shusaku (1923-96). Endo's mother converted to Roman Catholicism after her divorce, and as a child he was baptised in the faith. He went to the University of Lyon in 1950 to study the darkly existential French Catholic novelists François Mauriac, Georges Bernanos and Julien Green – he described himself as interested by "the impulse to sadistic behaviour" – and when he became a novelist himself was to be a favourite of another, English, Catholic writer: Graham Greene. *Silence* is the work of a tormented man torn between religions, cultures, impulses – he called himself a "mudswamp Japanese" and felt drawn towards what he calls "a meaningless nihilism", while believing that "the Japanese must absorb Christianity without the support of a Christian tradition or history or legacy or sensibility" – but he also felt Catholicism was the religion best equipped to present "the full symphony of humanity".

The sense of dread, of the probability of betrayal, capture and martyrdom for the priests once they set foot in Japan on what might seem a suicidal mission, is compounded by the moral dilemma they face in allowing indigenous Japanese Christians to shelter them: they place their hard-pressed peasant congregations in great danger by their mere presence. Their guide in Japan is a drunken, tormented wretch called Kichijiro (Kubozuka Yosuke) who denies he is a Christian, and they worry about betrayal, since the prize for denouncing a priest is 300 pieces of silver – ten times the fee Judas received. Endo's novel and Scorsese's film are inspired by the remarkable, touching history of the 'hidden Christians' or *Kakure Kirishitan*, who went underground in the 1630s and worshipped secretly, with their own priests, using Buddhist images as a cover and apostasising when required. When the ban on Christianity was lifted in 1868, these *Kirishitans* – that is, their faithful descendants – emerged, their handed-down prayers still containing fragments of Latin and Portuguese.

Garfield and Driver give fine, harrowed performances, but Scorsese's compassionate, very moving evocation of the life of the peasants, and his nuanced, chilling, darkly comic representation of the higher orders who persecute them, would not be possible without an extraordinary Japanese cast, who act with sincerity and passion, but also, between them, represent a quite astonishing hinterland of Japanese film history – from *Kwaidan* (1964) to *The Ballad of Narayama* (1983) to *Ichi the Killer* (2001) to *Tony Takitani* (2004) to *Kotoko* (2011). Nakamura Katsuo, who plays a Buddhist priest, was in *Kwaidan*, having his face painted to keep off evil spirits. The first villager we meet, Ichizo, who seems a Japanese peasant to the core, is played by Oïda Yoshi, 83, best known for his theatre work in Paris with Peter Brook (he also appeared in an earlier Portuguese film version of *Silence*, João Mário Grilo's *The Eyes of Asia*/*Os Olhos da Asia*, 1996).

Stylistically, *Silence* is the work of a master – but it is also, and more strikingly because it immediately follows the riotous excesses so brilliantly rendered in *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), notable for its restraint. Rodrigo Prieto's camera is acutely purposeful and inventive, but without dazzling pyrotechnics. There is music, but held down, mostly so faint you could almost miss it in a potent mix of natural sounds. The 'silence' in the title refers to the silence of God, which troubles what Scorsese calls in his introduction to Endo's novel "the questioning faithful", but it might also be taken as characterising the legendary quiet of Scorsese's sets, which he told Channel 4 News are for him "sacred spaces" – where the sacrament of cinema can take place at high intensity. Though (as ever with Scorsese) the film is shot through with a dark ironic comedy, it builds to a breathtakingly quiet, achingly poignant – and thought-provoking – conclusion.

Though 'Silence' is shot through with a dark ironic comedy, it builds to a breathtakingly quiet, achingly poignant – and thought-provoking – conclusion

The novel was also adapted, honourably, in 1971 by the Shinoda Masahiro, whose focus, as in his 1964 *Assassination*, seems less on issues of faith and doubt than on Japan's collision with the West – emblematised by Takemitsu Toru's score answering a Renaissance lute with atonal plinkings. Shot in a spiky, Japanese New Wave style, with a touching performance by David Lampson as Rodrigues, it does not have the spiritual intimacy or the epic grandeur of Scorsese's remarkable new film. Scorsese, who has seen so much Japanese cinema, has chosen not to watch it.

Scorsese's next film is *The Irishman*, written by Steven Zaillian, due to begin shooting in the summer of 2017, and (alongside Al Pacino) reuniting Robert De Niro and Harvey Keitel for the first time since *Mean Streets* in 1973. It concerns characters involved in the killing of the union leader Jimmy Hoffa, however, and isn't the occasionally mooted sequel to *Mean Streets*.

I spoke to Scorsese in New York in a hotel suite overlooking Central Park, a few hundred yards from the president-elect's Trump Tower.

Philip Horne: How did you first encounter the novel?

Martin Scorsese: Through Archbishop Paul Moore, an Episcopalian, here in New York, in 1988. It's very difficult for people to really understand a process that took 28 years. All I know is that the long gestation period just seemed to feel right. The biggest problem was hanging on to the property. And it just seemed to feel right to wait until I was able to get in a room with Jay Cocks and work up the script in the end of 2006.

So Archbishop Paul Moore comes to see the screening of almost the final cut of *The Last Temptation of Christ* [1988]. We had to screen it for the religious groups at the time, because they were all upset by it, but they hadn't seen it yet. Pretty much, *after* they saw it, they were *still* upset. Except him. Paul Moore came in with his wife, and he did say, "I'm here to talk about it because the film is Christologically correct." Now it's the first time I'd heard the word. And I didn't quite know what he meant, except that in the film, and in the story, it's fully divine and fully human. So, during that time, he spoke about his experience at the tomb, in the church of Golgotha, in Jerusalem. I was there once in 1983. And he had a very interesting kind of spiritual experience in there. I had it afterwards, after leaving the church – I'm not talking about leaving the Catholic Church, I'm talking about leaving the church of Golgotha physically, and getting in a plane and going to Tel Aviv. And I'm not a really good flyer. But something happened, where I just felt... embraced by a kind of love and care, you know. It was an incredible moment. I remember feeling an extraordinary sense of love, at that point. Anyway, he said, "I have a book for you I want you to read" – because we were talking about faith. And he said, "This is a story of faith." And he described the section where Rodrigues is forced either to apostasise

or not, and if he doesn't, it's, "You won't be killed: others will be killed." He said, "And then see what he does. And then you'll know."

And a couple of days later the book arrived, and it took a while. Because once I had finished *Temptation of Christ* I had to go around with it and talk about it, and battle it out, so to speak – and then go back to *GoodFellas* [1990], which I had started. And I wasn't even thinking I should make *GoodFellas* any more until Michael Powell read the script, and then he called me and said, "You really should do it." And I said, "Okay, let's go through with it."

During *GoodFellas* I was reading the book, and I finished it in Japan, in the end of August 1989. I had just finished 'acting', quote unquote [*laughs*] for Kurosawa, in *Dreams* [1990], up in Hokkaido, in northern Japan. And I went down to Tokyo again afterwards, and on the bullet train to Kyoto. I was going to Kyoto just to be again in one of the *ryokan*, the inns that they have there, to spend a night. I liked those very much. As a person who grew up in Manhattan, who is allergic to everything – who loved nature, but learned really to be against it, because of the asthma, and terrible allergies to pretty much everything, it was very foreign to me. But I felt a sort of comfort with it in Japan, with the sense of nature... there's a garden for each room, and somehow it seems that the garden is part of the room. That, along with, of course, Japanese cinema, slowly began to work a spell around me.

When I read the book I felt I wanted to make it. The reason is, and I've pointed this out, is that with *The Last Temptation of Christ* I went as far as I could in trying to make sense of Christianity. But I don't mean *logical* sense, I mean its mystery. Now, how does one embrace mystery, how does one have faith in mystery? For me the way into it, ultimately, was back to Christianity. Because it has a lot to do with how I felt when I read that Rodrigues made that decision. It's shameful, humiliating, disturbing, upsetting – and yet he made the right decision. In terms of Christianity. Now what is *that*? And it goes into self-lessness and compassion. When I read that last section, whatever I wanted to find in making *Last Temptation*, or *Raging Bull* to a certain extent, I knew I had to find it here, for me. But I didn't know how.

I didn't know how, I guess, to interpret it visually, how to structure it in the script, but I knew we had to get the rights to it. And so in 1990 or 1991, I think it was, we met with [producers] Mario and Vittorio Cecchi Gori in Cannes and they got the rights for us. Jay Cocks and I tried to write a script, around 1991 or 1992, but I got halfway through and we had to stop, and I never went back to it. And then a few years later I went back to it and read it and realised it was a good thing I *didn't* go back to it because it was not the point of the story. I was going off on tangents about the Jesuits, the political situation, all of that, and I needed to distil it down over periods of time to the essential. That also meant the essential frame and the visualisation of it. I just felt I had to find a way to visualise this thing, or to interpret it, really, because I just didn't understand. I had to just go on living, in a way.

PH: I suppose the ending of the novel is challenging to adapt, because it's narrated from outside Rodrigues's point of view, with all those documents. I remember reading that and thinking it's like reading a newspaper report of a law case and you're trying to work out what's happening.

MS: Yes. I love that. But the beauty of what he did there with the objectivity of the court clerk is the idea that you could read all the details of the facts in

APOSTASY NOW
Andrew Garfield and Adam Driver (below centre, on set) play a pair of Portuguese Jesuits who travel to 17th-century Japan to find their former teacher and confessor, who is rumoured to have renounced his faith and be living with a wife in a Japanese community

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIGITTE LACOMBE

a court case, but you don't understand. You don't connect on the human level with the suffering, the emotion... So when I read that epilogue, I realised it was one of the most interesting elements to deal with in the film. And eventually Jay and I changed the voiceover in the beginning of the last section to bring in Dieter Albrecht, the chronicler, and Dieter winds up stating that an amulet was found on the person of a servant named Kichijiro. And I just wanted to pull back and let everything... um, simmer... *inside the frame*, in a sense, in the story, without having to point out anything, specifically. For me it had a kind of poignancy, I liked it.

PH: The novel is powerful, but I was struggling to keep the thread, at the end, whereas in the film, I was very moved... Your ending moves in an amazingly concerted way.

MS: Well, yes, one of the things we found too was that there were some mistranslations by William Johnston in the English version. Endo said he wanted to show that Rodrigues was constantly apostasising. It was constant, every few months or something. The implication was, he said – and he wanted the reader to understand that – Rodrigues still had that faith. But he was caught doing things, apparently, otherwise they wouldn't keep forcing him to sign these apostasies.

PH: I was interested to see what you'd changed in parts of the novel, though the adaptation is very faithful. I noticed that in the bit where the priests arrive in Tomogi and they're given food, they immediately start gobbling it down, and then the villagers say grace. That's not in the novel, is it?

MS: No, it isn't. That's because they're so hungry.

PH: And then there's that bit where they're hearing confession but the Japanese villagers are confessing so fast that they don't know...

MS: ...what they're confessing. Yeah. "Could you start again?" Yes, exactly.

PH: There seem to be lots of little ways in which Rodrigues and Garupe are being unsettled or stretched.

MS: Oh, absolutely. The implication is there in the book because the line "even though we did not always understand what they were confessing" is in the book. Well, how do you dramatise that? And no matter how you dramatise it, it's kind of funny, in a way. But in a positive way.

PH: It's not a comedy in any sense, but there are comic moments in the film throughout.

MS: Oh yes. Even to the extent of Kichijiro having to get absolution all the time.

PH: Yes, I did think of Laurel and Hardy, that they've become this sort of double-act. It keeps happening, over and over.

MS: Yes, I know. Exactly. It keeps happening. And at the moments in which the worst things are going on. But that's the priest. The priest has to deal with that. That's his teacher! [*Laughs*] That's his teacher – at the worst moment. You can't think of yourself.

PH: That moment where Rodrigues is captured and he's brought to the prisoners, including Monica, sitting in a clearing, and he suddenly has that hysterical speech – "We're all going to die! Why are you so calm?" – and then looks at them and apologises. That made me think of *After Hours* [1985] and Paul. There's a moment with Teri Garr where he has a hysterical outburst and then he says, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

MS: "Sorry. Sorry." Exactly. He has several, there are a couple in there: there's one to Teri, and one to a guy he meets in the street. And then at one point, actually, he's on his knees, crying up to the heavens. He says, "I wanted to come downtown, and meet somebody, and have a good time – do I have to *die* for it?" Well, maybe. [*Laughs*]

PH: And then another moment a bit like that in *Silence*, which I thought was terrific, is when Monica and the other Christian captives have refused to apostasise, and Juan, the one-eyed captive, is left in the centre of the compound, and then Rodrigues who is watching from his cell relaxes, and he says, "Thank you God, for hearing my prayer." There's a moment of relaxation, which is in the novel, but not the line about the prayer. And then the decapitation quickly follows.

MS: Well, in the novel it's described how he's relaxed. So we decided that just in case – because we're not supposed to really understand what the guard is talking to Juan about, we're not supposed to hear that, or if we do hear it we hear that it's casual, we sense it's casual. So, why should he relax then? Well, that means that he's been praying, and that they'll get through this trial. And everything is calm now. Now whenever I see that kind of thing in a movie, I know something bad's going to happen so I have to do that very fast. [*Laughs*] So we're just as surprised as he is when that head comes rolling into frame.

PH: The figure of Father Ferreira, the apostate, is interesting. The orthodox 19th-century Jesuit histories, Sister Mary Bernard and Cecilia Mary Caddell, *Japan's Martyr Church* etc, are very scathing about apostasy... It's a disgrace and a scandal and a shame. But then there's a Jesuit martyr, Mastrilli, who comes to Japan, and, according to these pious accounts, so inspires Ferreira that in his 90th year he recants his apostasy and is hung over the pit. But Endo doesn't have that and you don't either.

MS: Right. No, no, no. That's not a proven event. That story about Ferreira's something that obviously has to do with saving face in Catholic Europe.

PH: Their mission is to save Ferreira's soul, they say at the beginning. He remains an ambiguous figure at the end, but you're suggesting really with the contrast between Ferreira and Rodrigues that, although they're there together searching imported items for Christian emblems and meanings...

MS: Oh yes, I don't think they get along very well, especially when Ferreira says, "Only Our Lord knows that" and Rodrigues says, "You said 'Our Lord'" and Liam Neeson looks at him and says, "I doubt it." It's the last thing he says. Next thing you know, he dies. Did he, really? About Ferreira, I'm certainly not sure, but ultimately we all felt that probably he did lose it, he did lose his convictions and his belief. And they almost don't like to look at each other. And Ferreira was his teacher, and his mentor. Ferreira did not hear the voice of Jesus. Now, however you want to interpret that voice, it's up to you, but he hears that voice. That's real. And Jesus tells him to do it. This is what it's about. I don't think Ferreira heard it.

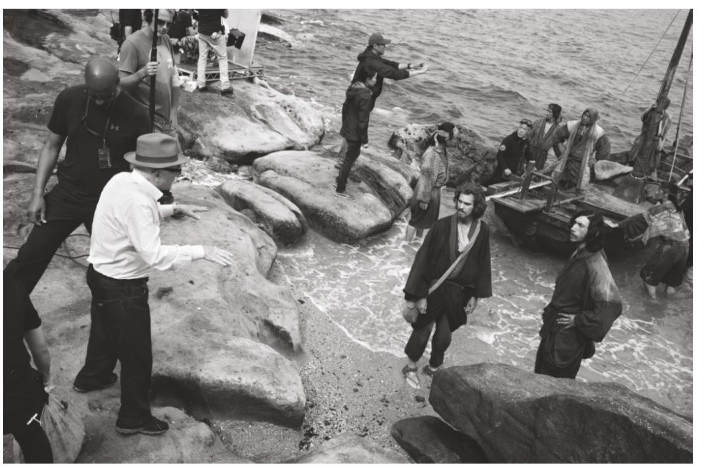
PH: Though when he hears it, it's in Ferreira's voice, isn't it?

MS: Not really, no. It's actually another actor. Yeah. That's interesting, because, no, if it were Ferreira's voice... No, it's another actor.

PH: There's a line in the novel that I think doesn't come in the film, where the inquisitor Inoue has heard that Rodrigues heard the voice of God, and says, "But isn't this just your self-deception?" And you don't have that in the film. But it still could be a reading?

MS: Could be. No, I don't think we need to have it. Well, he hears the voice. Self-deception is real.

THE LOOK OF SILENCE
Editor Thelma Schoonmaker with Martin Scorsese (above); and the director on set with Andrew Garfield and Adam Driver (right), and with Liam Neeson and Garfield (far right)



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIGITTE LACOMBE

If you hear the voice you hear it. If I perceive now that out of that chair [points across the room] there's a swan that suddenly, you know, spreads its wings, I'm *seeing* it. Now how do we deal with that? It's an experience. It's some sort of experience.

PH: In one sense, if the question is to do with the fate of Rodrigues's soul, rather than the question of the silence or otherwise of God, then in a way he's authentic, or he's true to his beliefs: at the end he has continued to believe, regardless of our feelings about his belief.

MS: I think he has, yes. Regardless of our feelings. He's continued to believe – now that may happen to many people; others, it may not. He's continued to believe, maybe even to the point where he's continued with the *process* of belief, which has a lot of doubt in it – which is doubt, and fear, and overcoming it somehow. I think Rodrigues actually found the truth of Christianity. That idea of selflessness and compassion, which is what we were looking for. I know it's not fashionable, probably, but it is about compassion, about respecting other people, about respecting other people's cultures, and not imposing ourselves on other people. But then there's land, there's water...

PH: You've shown the film in Rome to the Jesuits?

MS: Yes. To a lot of Asian, and Latin American priests, and the questions were very strong. There was one Jesuit who was really quite eloquent about it. He pointed out that the sense of the West coming into Asia and Japan and proclaiming their truth as the ultimate truth, whether or not you agree with that – it nevertheless didn't go over well with Asians. In the sense that, you know, "Our truth is superior to yours even though you've existed here for thousands and thousands of years, and you have this extraordinarily complicated and beautiful culture." Talking about the violence of the Japanese against the Christians in the film, he said one has to understand about the Japanese that there was violence perpetrated on them by the arrogance of the West. One of the key things was to lose that arrogance, to break it down. Ultimately Rodrigues makes that choice, to do as he does [in apostasising]: he sort of empties himself, and he's got nothing to be proud of any more... nothing left. Rodrigues – the Jesuit was pointing out – denies the 'truth', with quotes around it, to find the greater truth, the true Christianity. And this is even maybe a response to his questions about the silence of God. As this Jesuit said, colonisation is really what it's about – it's about money and land and water – and the destruction of the very soul of the people – of their culture. He said that to this day, sadly, the Christian faith is linked still to colonisation; and to use his words, it's a wound that is still unhealed.

PH: In a way the villagers in the film have a much stronger and simpler faith than their European priests.

MS: That's right. Yes, they do. And interestingly enough that faith is there whether they call it *Dainichi*, the Son of God, the 'Sun' or 'Son', however you spell it, their faith is still there.

PH: One of the films I've rewatched with *Silence* in mind was Mizoguchi's *Sansho Dayu* [1954]. It all hinges on a statuette of the goddess Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, who inspires the heroic revolutions of the main characters – and I found that the 'hidden Christians' who figure in *Silence*, would use images of that goddess as the Virgin Mary.

MS: That's extraordinary. I love *Sansho Dayu*. In the in-

LOSING FAITH
***Silence* is set in 17th-century Japan, at a moment when Christianity has been outlawed and thousands have been martyred or tortured and forced to publicly renounce their faith**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIGITTE LACOMBE

troduction Endo did to his book *A Life of Jesus* he said the Japanese don't need another figure of a judgemental God, punishing and to be feared; because he says the Japanese fear four things: earthquakes, fires, lightning and fathers. He said what they need is the mother; what they need is the nurturing. And if Christianity were really to take hold it has to be through the feminine aspect of it, because that is something that could be balanced within the culture. And hence the forgiveness of Kichijiro, hence Rodrigues looking at Kichijiro and saying, "Thank you for being with me." [*Laughs*] And Kichijiro tells him, "You don't have anything to thank me for." And "No, no," he says, "You were with me." [*Laughs*] It's really as simple, I think, as that.

PH: One of the things I thought was almost miraculous in the film is the marriage at the end and the wife, who never says anything. You just see her face, a few times, but it's very powerful and moving.

MS: She's remarkable. Asuka Kurosawa, her name is. I don't *think* she's related to Akira Kurosawa. She was in Shinya Tsukamoto's *A Snake of June* (2002), which is a film I like a lot – Tsukamoto who plays Mokichi [in *Silence*]. And she just auditioned for us, and when I saw she was in that, and then saw the look on her face and how she played it, I thought, "She's perfect." She's wonderful. We don't know what really goes on there, with the marriage, and what he learns, too, if he acts out the marriage. What I mean is: does he live as a man who is married, who has sex? We don't really know. But the fact that he has them there, and the fact that he's living with them, that demands from him other aspects of his life he didn't have before. And that makes him grow a certain way.

PH: Something about the way his wife and child look at him is very moving – and it seems as if they may have become Christians as well?

MS: Yes. Or, if not, we thought that they knew how much *he* still was, and that he would like that. [*Laughs*] It's very interesting, her looks, and the way she moves. The line Jay wrote was: "She did not weep." No, she's not going to say anything... One thing I didn't realise until we got deeply into the research was that the burial would be in a barrel. Which was, I thought, wonderful. [*Laughs*] But then, how is she going to put that thing in...? It was absolutely wonderful because it just twisted everything into something very special, especially her going up to the barrel, looking in, the angles that we had to have. All of that changed radically on set.

PH: Actually it makes going into the barrel in the final shot, when the camera goes through the flames, much more intimate – you're seeing his face and you're also seeing his hand and what's in it...

MS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, much more interesting. There were constant surprises like that throughout, once we got the film under way, as to what things actually looked like and how I had imagined them, and how things actually played out, and how I had imagined them. So it was constantly shifting around, rethinking.

PH: I was struck by the fact that you started reading the novel before you played Van Gogh in an episode in Kurosawa's *Dreams* and then finished it after. So I wondered if *Dreams* had got into it somehow?

MS: It may have. Well, I've got to tell you, that field in Hokkaido, I'd never experienced anything like that. Being in nature like that. Especially the rehearsal: there were dragonflies, and things around... There was something about being around the Japanese culture, and the behaviour of Kurosawa and everybody with him, that made everything more compelling and kind of exciting to finish the book there. It was just natural. I'll never forget being in that field with Akira Terao, the other actor. He had us do that scene two or three times – two cameras, on tracks – zooming in and out, so you never knew whether you're in close-up or not. For me it was an extraordinarily unimaginable experience. Somehow, you're right, through that experience – and even the make-up, the incredible men who did the make-up: three hours, painting my face, like a Kabuki mask almost. The concentration of that – I don't know how I did it – you know, it was a meditative state, in a way. It was very compelling.

I do like Ozu. Paul Schrader took myself and Brian De Palma to see 'Tokyo Story' in 1973 in Los Angeles. We were told it was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, film ever made

PH: The decapitation reminded me of *The Seven Samurai* [1954] and the early fight scene with Seiji Miyaguchi, that very rapid one which is then slow-motioned, isn't it?

MS: Yes, that's amazing – that's the one that I drew pictures of when I was in film school. I showed Kurosawa the picture I'd drawn of it and he said, "Ah! He's holding the sword in the wrong hand!" [*Laughs*] But yeah, there's definitely that, and of course the great one in *Sanjuro* [1962]. Do you remember the moment where they just stand there, for like 20 minutes – Toshiro Mifune and Tatsuya Nakadai – they don't move, and then suddenly there's a move that's so fast, and then there's an explosion of blood that goes across the CinemaScope frame, which was really a container of chocolate syrup, that exploded... You know, stunning – but the move was so fast. This, by the way, I said: "No, it has to be fast."

PH: I was also thinking about *Seven Samurai* and the way the samurai come to the village, and live with the villagers, as being like *Silence*. Their values are changed, aren't they?

MS: That's right. And that beautiful sequence, the last image of the graves and the swords and how *they* change... I showed it to my daughter a couple of years ago.

PH: It's an amazing period in Japanese cinema, isn't it? – because it's almost the same time as *Tokyo Story* [1953] and *Sansho Dayu*. You've mentioned Ozu in connection with *Silence*. I was slightly surprised, because I think of Ozu as more Paul Schrader's thing, and I hadn't thought of you as a particular admirer.

MS: Oh, I do like Ozu. I must admit, I've always said this, I've had a problem entering into that world, of Ozu. Paul Schrader took myself and Brian De Palma to see *Tokyo Story* in 1973 in California, in Los Angeles. We were told that it was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, film ever made. At that point I really liked Mizoguchi because that was the first Japanese film I had seen, *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1953). And then *The Life of Oharu* (1952) and then *Sansho Dayu* (1954) and then *Chikamatsu Monogatari* (1954), all these films – and I thought Mizoguchi was extraordinary, I was brought into this world by that. And then from Mizoguchi I went to Kurosawa, *Seven Samurai* (1954) – *Ikiru* (1952) was the one I really preferred. I liked *Ikiru*. I became kind of obsessed with that, viewing it over and over. And Kurosawa's cutting. That never left me. So there was Kurosawa. There was [Teinosuke] Kinugasa: *Gate of Hell* [1953], which had great, extraordinary use of colour and design, but nothing like the Kurosawa stuff and the Mizoguchi. And then before I saw Ozu, I saw [Nagisa] Oshima, and [Shohei] Imamura – *The Insect Woman* (1963), which was a major change for me. It turns

Yes, there's that Ozu spirit in 'Silence'. I don't say we're conjuring the spirit, but it's taken years for it to become part of what I do. Even in 'The Departed', there's a lot of it – and in a lot of the films

out that Imamura was one of the assistants for Ozu, and was very pleased when he could direct his own film and move the camera. [*Laughs*] He said, "I can't wait to get away!" And... well, [Hiroshi] Teshigahara to a certain extent, from *Woman of the Dunes* (1964), but he only made two or three pictures... But all the Japanese. The influx of Japanese cinema was stunning.

So when I saw Ozu, who is so different, I hadn't seen *that*... I just found it very difficult to understand visually what I was viewing. And it had to do with who the people were, and where they were in the frame. I just didn't get it. However: something happened. By two-thirds of the way into the film, I clicked into it somehow, and I was overwhelmed by the ending. I don't know what to say. I said, "Well, what *was* that? Why?" I lost track of the picture one third of the way through, because I couldn't tell what was going on, I couldn't tell where these people were coming from, who was entering the room. And so the one thing that got me was the power of the ending, how I was moved by it and how I couldn't describe it.

And the other thing was about these shots with nobody in them. Yet they're there. I said, "*What* is that?" It became a mystery. And I would go to see these Ozu pictures, and finally I think it was about ten, 12 years later, at that time I really settled into them and just went with them. Sometimes it doesn't translate for me – but when it does it's wonderful. So I go back to *I Was Born, But...* (1932), which was just one of the greatest, and I'm fascinated by the shots of objects and places without the people, and how those shots are first of all framed, how they're edited together, in which order, and then how the people are introduced. You hear something first, then you see them.

You know, I like watching the [Keisuke] Kinoshita earlier films, and one film called *Army* (1944). Have you seen it? Criterion in America has them out now, all of them that were made before the war and during the war. [Hiroshi] Shimizu I really got to like, over the past four or five years. But it took a number of years to see the [Mikio] Naruse films, and immediately, Naruse, I was into it. It was not a problem at all. I could follow the characters, I could understand what was happening. But I think the Naruse pictures deal with a kind of street life that I'm kind of used to, in a way. The real killer is *Floating Clouds* (1955). Have you seen it? Take a look at that! That ending, I don't want to say, there's something he does with the woman. She's dead, but it's quite moving. And the other one that's really great: *Sound of the Mountain* (1954). They were revelations.

But the Ozus have something special to them. Those inserts – I call them inserts, but they're not really inserts, I don't know what they are. The objects themselves speak to you. They're characters. The panelling is a character. [*Laughs*]

PH: Is there any trace of Ozu in *Silence*? The final sequence does seem to be... everything's calmed down.

MS: Yes. Exactly. And in the jail cells, his praying, designing the shots in his cell, particularly, was an enjoyable experience, because I feel comfortable in smaller spaces, from growing up downtown in these small rooms. So the way we would shoot you with the cup, for example, it's how far the camera moves, the size of you in the frame. Should we be looking in profile? Should it be slightly over the shoulder? And if it is over the shoulder, should his face turn, so that you can see a little more three-quarter, you know? And what does that mean? How does he see the face of Jesus on the floor of the cell? And should he be saying, "I will not abandon you, I will not abandon you" frontal, or profile? That sort of thing. And I'd decided that the cell should have wooden bars, which make it like in a cage. And that would be interesting, because no matter what we do, there would always be some space behind him, but that still allows us to be very rigid, and precise, in our angles in this small space. And so, yes, there's that Ozu spirit. I don't say we're conjuring the spirit, but it's taken years for it to become part of what I do. Even in *The Departed* [2006], there's a lot of that – and in a lot of the films.

My energy level is very different from the Ozu films, so I found I had to slow down to observe it. I had to learn how to watch it, like you have to learn how to watch the Antonioni pictures. Learning how to watch *L'avventura* [1960], learning to see the world in a different way – architecturally. The emotion and the psychology is in the architecture. It's like "Whoa. And the architecture's in the frame. The people are like buildings: wow! Amazing." But you don't know that at first. Granted, *Sight & Sound* helped with that sort of thing, because they told us, "Go see *L'avventura*" – so we did. I knew what it was about; but I may not have known how to look at it right away. It was *more* accessible to me, being an Italian. With Ozu I really had to learn how to view another language, in a way, of cinema.

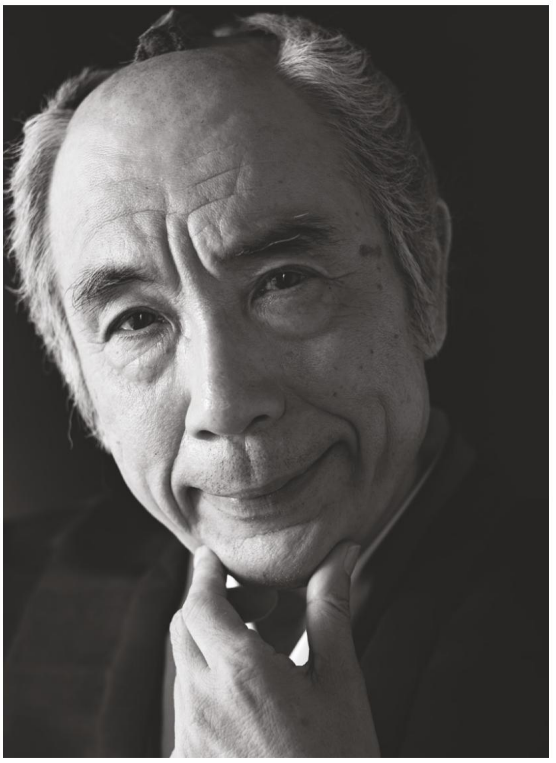
But Bresson, also. He was so obviously powerful – how you shoot a person's hand, and yet make it have such impact. This was something that never left me, the Bresson. What do you really need to see? Even in *Lancelot du Lac* [1974]: the tournament, the knights on horses? He has a shot of the foot in the stirrup. That's it. You don't really need to see the whole. The detail is where it is. It's where he lands the camera, and what he chooses to show you. And there's a confinement to it, but that has the essence in it, it really does.

It's the opposite of excess, like in *Wolf of Wall Street* or in *Casino* [1995] or even in *The Aviator* [2004] to some extent – but *The Aviator* has a lot of it. The insert of the doorknob, the insert of the plates, all these shots were very much involved with the Ozu-Bresson approach – and some Hitchcock, there's no doubt. I like Hitchcock's point-of-view shots very much. But there's a tension in the frame with these images and I go for that. Sometimes I've had other people shoot it for me, but it just doesn't work, because I have to be there. I don't know what it is, maybe the cup should move to the left. "Oh, for God's sakes, why can't I just do it quickly?" You know, you do get impatient with yourself, but it does *mean* something.

PH: The *Wolf of Wall Street* seems like such a contrast to *Silence*, but in a way Jordan Belfort is selling a religion. He is a sort of missionary. He's like Ferreira in a way, isn't he, in that he betrays his followers at the end?

MS: Of course he is: completely. There were different reasons for making the film, but once I decided to make it I thought, "Well, let's embrace the real spirit of unfettered capitalism. Let's just do it. Let's point out to the audience, 'This is what we do. You don't have to know *how* we do it, but this is our attitude and this is our way of thinking, and it is good because we say it is.'" And now we've got it.

CAST AWAY
(Opposite, from top left) Ogata Issey as the inquisitor Inoue, Kubozuka Yosuke as the Jesuits' guide Kichijiro, Asano Tadanobu as the interpreter, and Scorsese with Andrew Garfield on the set of *Silence*



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIGITTE LACOMBE

PH: [Gesturing at Trump Tower] I suppose we have got it.

MS: Yeah. It's an extraordinary thing. I think there was one review... Somebody had written in England about the film that it had "no discretion". I said, "Yes, that's right." I don't think it was a negative comment either. What was interesting too, the same person said, about the wonderful scene, I think, with Leo [DiCaprio], where he's crawling to his car, where he tries to get in the car. Which by the way was done that way – he used his foot – because when I chose the car I forgot that the door opened up, not out, so he couldn't use his hand. I said, "You have to get that door open." He said, "How should I do that?" I said, "Use your foot." He said, "I'll try." You actually see him trying, you know. And the question that is asked by this person was, "Why are we laughing?" Which *is* the point.

PH: Do you have a favourite moment in *Silence*? Mine I suppose might be that shot of Rodrigues's face as Kichijiro is being taken away, which is amazing.

MS: Oh yes, I like that very much. If you look at it, it starts out in a two-shot, then Kichijiro's taken out of the shot, and it leaves an empty space. Then on a certain line in the voiceover it cuts in tighter: "Even when he died" I think it is. He knows he's not going to see Kichijiro again. And the masking of his feelings, the masking of what he's thinking, there's something really very interesting. I enjoyed that very much. But there are a lot of things I like.

The samurai coming through the mist into the village was something that happened because we had shot part of the scene earlier in the day in the sunlight, and this mist came in. I had imagined opening the scene another way: I had the shot designed, with a horse running through the village, the way it's described in the book, kicking up the dust of the village, and of course there's no dust, it's all mud, everything was wet. So the horse didn't work. We were sitting there, and I said, "We have to get the shot of the samurai entering the village, and then they have Ichizo tied up, and they're bringing him in. Ready to go?" I said: "Get two cameras, one wider, one tighter, but basically it's a shot where they come towards us: the first samurai comes into frame, he gets closer and closer and as he gets to a certain point, swing over to the second one; as *he* gets to the same point, swing over to Ichizo."

So it's a matter of how far into profile they go, and that sort of thing. And then I looked at the monitors and it was all white. There was nothing there. And I said. "What happened to the camera?" and they said, "That's mist." I said, "Where are the actors?" And they said, "They're there." They said, "Shall we rehearse? Let's rehearse." And I said, "No, let's shoot it. They're going to come through the mist *some* time, and where they come out, it could be interesting!" [*Laughs*] So you see it exactly as we did on set. And I said, "That's the opening, then." But the picture was filled with those kinds of episodes.

PH: It's lovely how Inoue, the inquisitor, is almost unnoticed for a long time. At first you don't realise how important he is. And Issey Ogata is wonderful in the role.

MS: Oh yes, I'd hoped to do that. Because I was very surprised in the book. I'd have liked to have gotten the impact even a little more. But these are the scenes I chose to dramatise, and in the book it's written in such a way that you never expect him to be Inoue. I don't know if anybody catches on that it *is* him, but we did as best we could. And Issey Ogata *is* amazing. Well, you saw *The Sun*

I really liked Mizoguchi because that was the first Japanese film I'd seen, 'Ugetsu Monogatari'. I was brought into this world of Japanese cinema by that

BIG IN JAPAN
Mizoguchi Kenji's *Sansho Dayu* (1954, top) and *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1953, above); Scorsese as Vincent Van Gogh in Kurosawa Akira's *Dreams* (1990, left); and Andrew Garfield and Liam Neeson in *Silence* (opposite)

REX FEATURES (1) / RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE (1) / BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (1)

[Aleksandr Sokurov, 2005], right? He played Hirohito. I was surprised that he came in to do an audition. We cast him in 2009. He has this way about him, the way he moves, and the way he delivers his lines, in Japanese *and* in English. Extraordinary.

PH: You said the novel is still very popular in Japan, so these actors knew it, and how their parts fitted in?

MS: Oh yes, it is, and they knew it. The big fight was, who was going to be Kichijiro? And we wound up with Yosuke [Kubozuka] only a few months before we started shooting. It was very interesting. That was the hardest to cast. He's quite a fascinating actor, an incredible person. He's been through a lot in his life. He's young, but he's been through a lot. And I think you could see it, in his eyes. And Asano [Tadanobu, who plays the interpreter] was extraordinary. Asano and Shinya Tsukamoto playing Mokichi. The two of them, of course they acted in *Ichi the Killer* [2001]. Asano and Shinya, they're great. Shinya Tsukamoto's so amazing, I love his films [as a director].

PH: It will be really interesting to see how the film goes down in Japan.

MS: Yes, I have to go there next month. I was there a few weeks ago, and they all were very excited, and Endo's son saw the picture. He was pleased. And so we'll see. That's the thing. It has become a book that is greatly revered in Japan... Everybody would visualise Kichijiro their own way, Inoue also, and the interpreter too – although I always say, "Is he really an interpreter? Who *is* he? What is he really up to?" I mean, obviously he can interpret, but really... he seems to have more power than just a mere interpreter.

It reminds me of *The Prisoner* [1955], the story of Cardinal Mindszenty. They made a film version of it: Peter Glenville directed, with Alec Guinness as Mindszenty and Jack Hawkins as the interrogator breaking him down. And that beautiful line at the end: there's a young man, the guard in the prison, and Mindszenty becomes a hero to him; but Mindszenty gives in, he collapses finally, he succumbs to the – at that time you would call it brainwashing, I guess – and as he's freed, Mindszenty is putting his cardinal's robes on, and the guard is just looking at him, saddened, and greatly let down and disappointed by Mindszenty, what he did. And Alec Guinness looks up to the guard and says, "Don't judge the priesthood by the priest." [*Laughs*] Interesting...

***Silence* is out now in UK cinemas and is reviewed on page 88. A Martin Scorsese retrospective runs at the BFI Southbank, London, until the end of February**

To protect and to serve: Martin Scorsese stands up for colour preservation in 1980 at London's National Film Theatre

AN ACTIVIST IN THE ARCHIVES

Alongside his directing career, Martin Scorsese has played critical roles as an archivist, historian and teacher, advocating tirelessly on behalf of overlooked films from around the globe.

By Ian Christie

Martin Scorsese's enthusiasm for cinema history is well known. Two television series, along with countless documentaries, DVD commentaries and book prefaces bear witness to a passion that remains undimmed after nearly 40 years of activism. But to understand just why Scorsese feels so committed to rescuing forgotten and decaying films, it's important to remember his formative experiences as a movie-mad youngster.

One of these was the accidental outcome of a restricted range of films available to US television in the 1950s, when the major studios were still reluctant to help their emerging competitor. The fact that a cash-strapped independent such as Alexander Korda had no scruples about selling to television meant that young Scorsese was able to see Powell and Pressburger's *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951) so often that he knew it by heart, at a time when few in Britain were even aware of its existence. Years later, Scorsese was able to repay his early debt to this exquisitely stylised film by raising funds for its revival, as the latest in a series of Powell-Pressburger restorations that has so far included *The Red Shoes* (1948) and *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943). (Powell, in turn, acknowledged

what he owed to Scorsese's support by titling the second volume of his autobiography *Million-Dollar Movie*, after the early television showcase that had screened the film).

Restoration of key films as a prelude to high-profile screenings and home-video releases has been a way for Scorsese to combine his work as a filmmaker with a historian's sense of priorities. This too started early in his professional career, after his budding enthusiasm had been nourished by trips with his father to see major new releases. When a big Powell-Pressburger retrospective was planned for New York's Museum of Modern Art, following the lead set by London's National Film Theatre in 1978, Scorsese promoted the commercial reissue of Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960). Crucially, he was able to ensure that the film was shown in colour for the first time, having only been seen in black and white by Scorsese and his filmmaker contemporaries during its exploitation release in 1962.

In the same year as that retrospective, Scorsese contributed an influential article to *Film Comment*, revealing his 'guilty pleasures' among cinema's acknowledged classics, which launched him as a new kind of insider expert, unafraid to acknowledge the poverty row B movies that would soon become part of film history's new pantheon. Knowing that he had already established personal contact with Powell and Pressburger, in 1984 I asked him to write a foreword to my new book on the pair, *Arrows of Desire*. And later in the decade, after his promotional tour with *The Colour of Money* (1986), the critic and filmmaker David Thompson and I began recording the interviews which Michael Powell encouraged us to turn into a book, *Scorsese on Scorsese*.

The story that emerged from this, and from the BFI-sponsored television series *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies* (1995), was of Scorsese's own development as a filmmaker through the discovery of a much richer and more varied Hollywood history than many realised. With episodes such as 'The director as smuggler' and 'The director as iconoclast', the series cast its host as an explorer, opening up an unknown continent of delights with the same enthusiasm that Andrew Sarris once had in his classic *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968*. What made Scorsese's discovery so compelling was not only his onscreen charisma, but his body of work as a fellow director. This was participant history of a new kind.

But American cinema was by no means the whole story. Scorsese is the grandson of Sicilian immigrants, and had long felt a kinship with Italian cinema. In 1999, he completed another journey of exploration, *My Voyage to Italy* – the

***The Red Shoes* (1948) is one of three Powell and Pressburger films to be restored under Scorsese's tutelage**

Thelma Schoonmaker and Scorsese

Scorsese with Michael Powell

BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (2); PA PHOTOS (1)

original Italian title of which, *Il mio viaggio in Italia*, was a homage to one of the films he cherishes most, Roberto Rossellini's *Journey to Italy* (*Viaggio in Italia*, 1954) – a highly personal story of discovering the land of his fathers through its cinema. With much of its four hours devoted to a passionate account of Rossellini's post-war career, Scorsese and his editor Thelma Schoonmaker broke new ground in showing unusually long excerpts from the films under discussion, through which Scorsese guides us as a true insider. And if his relentless schedule ever allowed it, a second instalment of the Italian documentary was envisaged, along with an equivalent 'journey' through what British cinema has meant to him.

These are far from bland endorsements of the already acknowledged. Scorsese's defence of *Journey to Italy*, in which George Sanders and Ingrid Bergman struggle through often crude dubbing to reach their epiphany, challenges the weight of Anglo-American opinion that rejected the film. And he has continued to contribute to, and direct, films that pay tribute to filmmakers he considers unjustly neglected. An early interview he gave for Craig McCall's film about the great Technicolor cinematographer Jack Cardiff, *Painting with Light* (2007), helped get that completed, as did an extract featuring Scorsese which was shown on TV when Cardiff received an honorary Academy Award in 2001. Scorsese's other documentaries about single filmmakers all make a case for their subjects, whether this is the 1940s horror producer Val Lewton (*Val Lewton: The Man in the Shadows*, 2007), or the still controversial figure of Elia Kazan (*A Letter to Elia*, 2010), unforgiven by many for his 'friendly' testimony during the McCarthy hearings. Some have become major archival productions in their own right, such as the 2005 Dylan odyssey *No Direction Home* and his touching tribute to George Harrison, *Living in the Material World* (2011), both of which combine the real sense of Scorsese as a fan and contemporary of his subjects with a controlling mastery of form imparted to his collaborators.

But increasingly, much of Scorsese's archival energy has been directed towards fundamental issues of preservation and restoration. This started with his realisation that the modern colour stock of his own films was fading fast, and in 1980, when promoting *Raging Bull* – a film largely in monochrome (encouraged by Michael Powell) – he used the festival circuit to demand publicly that Kodak produce 'archival quality' stock. Next came the launch of the Film Foundation, in 1990, with a board that marshalled an impressive cast of senior directors, including Woody Allen, Robert Altman, Francis Coppola, Clint Eastwood, Stanley Kubrick, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. This has since been reinforced by equally impressive recruits from the younger generation, such as Paul Thomas Anderson, Wes Anderson, Peter Jackson and Ang Lee, and has been allied with the powerful Directors Guild of America. Staffed by trusted long-term associates of Scorsese, this has created a platform for raising both funds and awareness of the threat to American film heritage.

***Touki Bouki* (1973)**

But Scorsese's horizons have never been limited to America, however proud he is of its achievements. Hence, the Film Foundation's World Cinema project, which has allowed him to range across, quite literally, the whole film world, and direct aid to countries where there is no adequate national archive. The list of 28 films already preserved reads like a gazetteer, from countries as far-flung as Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Morocco, Taiwan, Turkey and Senegal. And in many ways it's a reminder of the context in which Scorsese himself became a young cineaste, when 'new waves' were arriving at festivals and arthouse cinemas from many distant countries whose production had not previously been seen abroad.

Scorsese and his staff are certainly reliant on advice from critics and archives around the world about key films that are in danger of disappearing. But it's also possible to discern among the Film Foundation's choices his own enthusiasm for youthful films by, for instance, Edward Yang (*Taipei Story*, 1985; *A Brighter Summer Day*, 1991) and Hou Hsiao-Hsien (*The Boys from Fengkuei*, 1983) from Taiwan, Lino Brocka in the Philippines (*Manila in the Claws of Light*, 1975), and from Africa, Ahmed El Maanouni (*Alyam, Alyam*, 1978; *Trances*, 1981) and Djibril Diop Mambéty (*Touki Bouki*, 1973). Thanks to the Film Foundation's funding and the prestige of its brand, many of these now appear regularly at festivals, often accompanied by a personal message of support from Scorsese. And more recently, under the banner of 'Martin Scorsese Presents', he has curated a touring programme of Polish cinema from 1957-87, which is on offer to exhibitors as a programmable package. The days when he could contribute to teaching at his alma mater, NYU, are long past; but his introductions and endorsements reach a much wider audience than any single film school, and arguably carry more weight.

Increasingly, much of Scorsese's energy has been directed towards fundamental issues of preservation and restoration

In all of these endeavours, Scorsese is lending his reputation and currency as a popular commercial filmmaker to support films and directors that are threatened or simply unknown. The appetite for discovery that was widespread when his 'movie-brat' generation was young has undoubtedly faltered, with the few surviving arthouse distributors and exhibitors forced to become more mainstream. Nor can DVD releases adequately fill the gap, since these need promotion to break through; and Scorsese is one of the distressingly few contemporary filmmakers willing to engage in such advocacy.

The Film Foundation doesn't just raise money for restoration. Its goal is to promote film education *per se*, with most of its restorations actually bookable off the website, and educational materials available

for classroom use. Its greater mission is to educate the whole film community about the need for long-term preservation – especially acute in the digital era, when so many people still assume that digital copies of films are somehow permanent. Following his earlier campaign for archivable film stock, Scorsese has been in the forefront of efforts to spread awareness that digital files are not a durable preservation format. Indeed, they are already proving more fragile and unpredictable than many film stocks. So far, the only long-term storage solution for colour films seems to be to recapitulate the Technicolor process by producing separations on archival film.

Yet, perhaps ironically, it is digital technology that has enabled some of Scorsese's most cherished restoration projects to emerge. The Powell-Pressburger series mentioned above is a testimony to what digital restoration can deliver, when it is guided by the expertise of such filmmakers as Schoonmaker and Scorsese. Where many restorations that are seen in digital form can be disappointingly 'flat', these three Archers masterpieces, in their latest form, show what's possible – and represent what could be considered critical restorations. Applying the same criteria that they would to Scorsese's own films, the pair have pushed their collaborators to the limit, to create image and sound which they believe true to the makers' intentions, in relation to present-day audience expectations. The result has been new versions where we can see more than ever before – for instance, in some of the settings of *The Red Shoes*. Problems have arisen, such as the need to 'correct' newly visible make-up. But this is restoration guided by ethnical and aesthetic considerations that are still rare in cinema.

And while Scorsese drives these multiple strands of archiving and promotional work with remarkable energy, they are also of course linked to his own creative work as a filmmaker. Even in his first decade as a director, there was a strong sense of the influences that lay behind films such as *Mean Streets* (1973) and *Taxi Driver* (1976), from new-style documentary to the underground and indie work of Kenneth Anger and John Cassavetes. For Scorsese's generation of filmmakers, the sense of 'belatedness' is almost inescapable: their films can never belong to the same canon as the classic films that inspired them, but can often refer to this in more or less explicit ways. Even more than his contemporaries Francis Coppola, Brian De Palma and George Lucas, Scorsese's work can be read as a continuing dialogue with the past, a form of inspired 'mannerism' in art-historical terms.

Some of his films have had an explicit subtext of cinema history, as, for example, the commentary in *The Aviator* (2004) on interwar Hollywood through the story of Howard Hughes as a maverick auteur – complete with a simulation of how Technicolor evolved built into the film's changing palette. And in *Hugo* (2011), Scorsese committed himself to nothing less than a full-scale recreation of the artisanal world of Georges Méliès, gleefully inserting himself into a detailed facsimile of Méliès's glasshouse studio, constructed at Shepperton. Here, too, his unique perspective as both practising filmmaker and historian contributed the boldly effective idea of remaking Méliès's 'artificially arranged scenes' in both colour and 3D, thus restoring for us something of the magic that these must have had for their first audiences.

***Manila in the Claws of Light* (1975)**

Ultimately, Scorsese's zeal for the history of cinema can't be divorced from his equal zeal for continuing to explore new creative challenges in his features and television series. I can recall moments spent on the sets of recent films when he has been completely caught up in recalling aspects of film history – an actor's credits, a moment in some forgotten favourite film – before being brought back to the directorial task in hand. The man is all of a piece, and we are the lucky beneficiaries of his extraordinary, inextinguishable passion for cinema. S

Ian Christie will give a talk about Scorsese's role as a cinema historian at BFI Southbank, London, on 26 January

***Journey to Italy* (1954)**

THE RULES OF ABSTRACTION

Some of the most memorable moments in Scorsese's work come when he reaches beyond the merely real into realms of pure rhythm, form and colour

By Nick James

On an unseasonably cold night in August last year, the Sarajevo Film Festival showed the digital restoration of *Taxi Driver* (1976) at its Open Air Cinema, with an onstage interview with Robert De Niro to warm things up. De Niro – never the warmest guy at any occasion – did his best, but left as the lights came down, taking a portion of the crowd with him. Though I'd watched parts or all of the film on TV and DVD many times in the intervening years, this was the first time I'd seen *Taxi Driver* on the big screen since it was released in the UK during the summer of 1976 – and this was an *enormous* screen.

As the cold began to seep into our bones and the crowd got more depleted, what struck me was not the scenes so regularly excerpted of De Niro as Travis Bickle expressing his dissociated worldview – "all the animals come out at night" etc – but the abstract qualities of the film, how daringly mythopoeic the shot design and effects were, how splashily expressive the lighting. I had forgotten the alternation of traffic lights and taximeter, almost like a rhythmic trope in one of the city symphony films of Walter Ruttmann or Dziga Vertov. The close-ups of De Niro's eyes at that enormous scale had their own disembodied intensity. Maybe it was the night temperature, the slow vanishing of human warmth, that made me view it so formally, but these qualities made *Taxi Driver* seem as radical and fresh a work as it had in that distant time when it was brand new.

When I looked up the word abstract, seven definitions came up: two adjectives, three verbs and two nouns. The adjectival one closest to what I want to talk about here reads: "Relating to, or denoting art that does not attempt to represent external reality, but rather seeks to achieve its effect using shapes colours and textures." That's not a loose enough definition to represent the way the word is often used about film effects. The kind of abstraction I mean here is used by Scorsese to represent the subjectivity of the protagonist's state of mind. For the purposes of what follows, therefore, let's say that by abstract, I mean any moment in a film where a visual composition or effect disrupts, undermines, overwhelms or destroys, however temporarily, the verisimilitude of the image. Or, to put it more plainly, in Scorsese's work, cinema's full box of perceptual tricks is at work in ways we all recognise, but rarely see handled so consummately.

Scorsese uses abstraction sparingly. Being a film buff, he would have experienced avant-garde film, and knows his Len Lye, Kenneth Anger and Stan Brakhage, not to mention the work of the

TAXI DRIVER

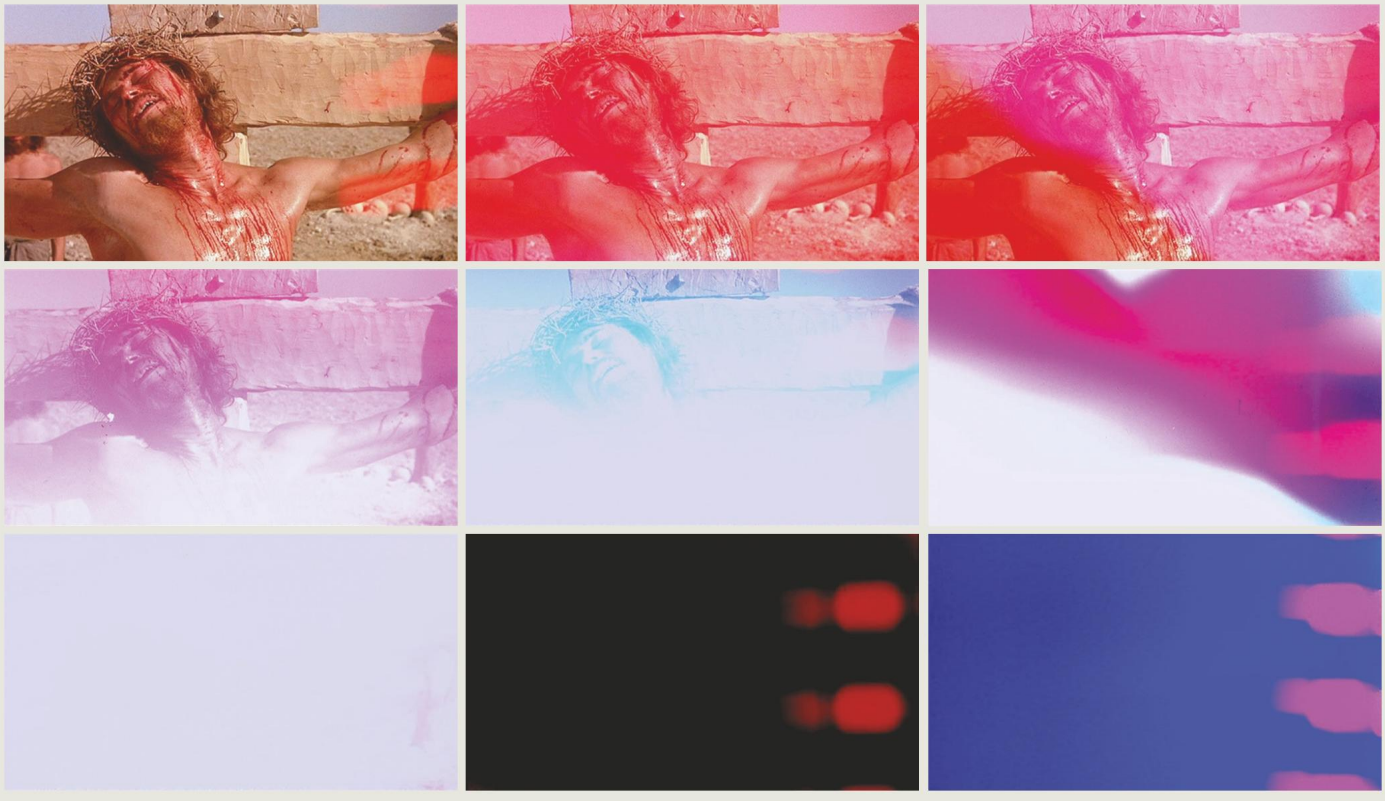
'The alternation of traffic lights and taximeter are like a rhythmic trope in a city symphony film by Dziga Vertov'

MEAN STREETS

'The diffusely expressionist opening bar scenes are bathed in a red glow, the shallow focus deliberately slipping to blur out shapes'

THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

'The final shot cuts to the kind of flaring colours seen when you get to the end of a reel of film as it's projected'



abstract expressionist painters of the 1950s and 60s (this last enthusiasm was made clear in Scorsese's segment of the 1989 anthology *New York Stories*, which featured Nick Nolte as a Pollock-like painter). Though his formally more straightforward films – such as *The King of Comedy* (1983) and *GoodFellas* (1990) – rarely push too far in that direction, the experimental urge in Scorsese has always been a wellspring of that legendary manic energy. Each succeeding feature seems to be used to confront fresh formal and/or technical challenges.

If there is one moment of pure dictionary definition abstraction, it's the final shot of *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988). After Willem Dafoe's Jesus says "It is accomplished," there's an immediate cut to the kind of flaring colours seen when you get to the end of a reel of film while it's still being projected. More common in Scorsese, though, is what the constantly gliding camera sees in the 'El Watusi' sequence of *Who's That Knocking at My Door* (1967). Young men in suits are the subjects, relaxing and chatting; yet framing and movement, set to a Latin dance number, draw your attention to their arrangement as forms, as multiples of heads and torsos. A similar sequence is steered in a more diffusely expressionist direction in the opening bar scenes of *Mean Streets* (1973), in which everything is bathed in a red glow, the bodies of the go-go dancers are broken up into erotic trigger elements, the shallow focus deliberately slipping to blur out shapes, and we follow the back of Harvey Keitel's head as he seems to glide around the room.

In *The Age of Innocence* (1993), phrases from handwritten letters are blazoned across an otherwise realistic scene – another deliberate tearing away at the surface of dramatic reconstruction. Shots of period paintings punctuate and reflect the action. That film also has a bizarre slow-motion street crowd scene, men all holding on to their hats in the wind so that the hats establish their own formal presence. There's a brilliant quick dissolve to white, too, that ends a city view time-lapse transition from night to day. It resolves back to a line of spectators, posed as if for a photograph, so that the white-out feels like a slow-motion photo flash.

Scorsese shows his fondness in *The Age of Innocence* for high overhead shots that make table arrangements feel like they're glued to a canvas, like a Julian Schnabel painting, or that turn people into moving dots or still mannequins – as in *Kundun* (1997), in which dead monks lie together like drying red peppers. There's a very brief shot in the otherwise performance-centric *Silence* (2016), in which the three black-clad Jesuit priests move across a pavement that's patterned like a Paul Klee painting. Arguably, they are, in Klee's phrase, "taking a line for a walk".

The experimental urge in Scorsese has always been a wellspring of his legendary manic energy

In a discussion of attacks on the perception of reality, you would expect the depiction of memory and hallucination in *Shutter Island* (2010) to figure. In one deliberately Agatha Christie-like scene, two US marshals are being introduced by Dr John Cawley (Ben Kingsley) to his elder colleague Dr Jeremiah Naehring (Max von Sydow) in the ridiculously opulent Captain's Lodge. Coming disruptions are presaged by a shot that moves around the back of Naehring's obscuring wing-backed velvet chair, past a looming vase, until eventually von Sydow's face comes into view just in time for him to tell us we're hearing the Mahler piano quartet. Through the distant windows we see snow falling, and then sheets of paper cascading inside the room from the ceiling. Soon we're in a different room with Teddy's wife (Michelle Williams), and now it's unexplained blackened flakes of paper or ash that are falling.

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

'HIgh overhead shots make table arrangements look like they're glued to a canvas, like a Julian Schnabel painting'

Gold tinsel streams down to radically different emotional effect in one of the office party scenes in *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), but it's hardly an abstract moment. Wilder scenes come later, when DiCaprio's quaalude addiction hits what he calls "the drool phase", as represented by a light-striated club scene, or the shot through a fish tank that makes the tropical fish giant occluders of a deal being struck. Chemically altered perceptions are the usual trigger for such scenes.

In *Raging Bull* (1980), however – the film that seems to attack the image the most – it's the rhyming of punches with flashbulbs that alters perception. These other kinds of assault induce temporary loss of vision, their own white-out transitions. And this is a film that is all about what's going on in the mind of middleweight boxer Jake LaMotta (Robert De Niro). But the title credits scene is more formal: it's shot through the three ringside ropes of a boxing ring, beyond which we see LaMotta skipping and feinting on his own, with the hood of his gown up. The monochrome image is pushed for grain. The ropes look a little like staves on a piece of music, with LaMotta bouncing like a crotchet between them – or to be more obviously symbolic, he is behaving like a bucking *toro* in a bullring. The rope image meets its bookend near the end of the film, after LaMotta invites Sugar Ray Robinson to pummel him. The ring is now empty, and we see a huge gout of LaMotta's blood hanging off the top rope, which looks almost like it could be an extrusion from Matthew Barney's Cremaster Cycle.

In 'Raging Bull' the rhyming of punches with flashbulbs alters perception, inducing temporary loss of vision

The announcer's mic dropping into view seems abstract at first; so does the steam-obscured entrance to a sweat-box as LaMotta's trainer comes in. The way the camera aligns itself with an opponent's point of view when he's knocked out, so that it's the world behind him that tilts on its side as he falls, is another great disorienting effect. You can take the way one of the bouts is represented only by one slow-mo blurring right arm as verging on the abstract; so too the looming circles of the big flash dishes on the paparazzi cameras.

Raging Bull abounds with visual play, but what I've neglected here is the abstracting use of sound. That famous round 13 scene, in which Sugar Ray Robinson pummels LaMotta, is foreshadowed at first by a scene of LaMotta's body being massaged and sponged down with bloody water while we hear slowed-down incomprehensible sound. In the scene itself, when Robinson is suddenly looming and backlit with his fist raised, a cacophony comes into play: an animal growling, flashbulbs fizzing and popping, audience screams, all leading to the incredible slow-motion whomp of Ray's fist crunching into LaMotta's cheek and brow, followed by the hiss and splash of spurting blood.

Sound is used more lyrically, but just as skilfully, in the scene in which LaMotta attends the St Clare's Church Summer Dance to get another look at local beauty Vickie, having earlier spied her at the swimming pool. When he sees her at her table, the dialogue drops away and the music – a jazz piano foot-tapper – comes up as he sees her get up from the table in slow-motion, to leave with one of the made guys. Jake follows them as they go down the stairs and past a squabble that's breaking out. When he gets outside, the music switches suddenly to Bob Crosby's whistled version of the swing classic 'Big Noise from Winnetka'; he stares as Vickie is driven away, again in slow-mo, in an open-top coupé. His reverie is finally broken by the gatecrashers being thrown out around him. Again here, it's De Niro's point of view that is subjectivity writ large.

With thanks to Kent Jones for guidance

RAGING BULL

'The ropes look a little like staves on a piece of music, with LaMotta bouncing like a crotchet between them'

FORBIDDEN COLOURS

The brutalising effects of Jim Crow legislation and the landmark battle to end the criminal sanction of interracial marriage in the US are the subjects of Jeff Nichols's 'Loving', which focuses on an ordinary couple trying to get on with their lives in Virginia in the middle of the last century

By Kelli Weston

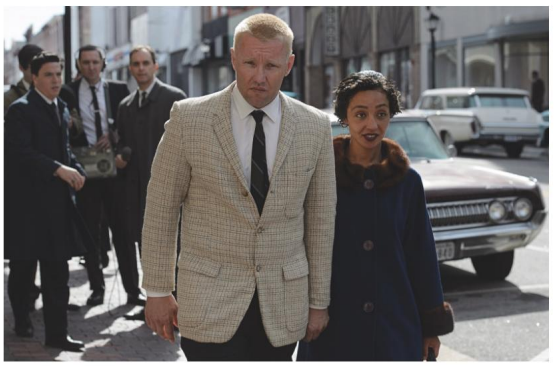
Mildred and Richard Loving didn't begin their married life as outspoken civil rights activists and their story didn't unfold on the frontlines of any marches, but their relationship would ultimately lead to the landmark ruling that ended the prohibition of interracial marriage in America. Forced to fight to reside freely in their home state of Virginia, Richard, a white man, and Mildred, a black woman, travelled to Washington DC to marry in 1958, when Mildred became pregnant. At the time, miscegenation was a felony in Virginia, punishable by up to five years in prison. Shortly after they married, an anonymous tip led police in the middle of the night to their house where they arrested the couple. They were sentenced to one year in prison, which was suspended on the condition that they not return to Virginia together for 25 years. Although initially they accepted the verdict, life in Washington did not suit Mildred. Stifled in the city, isolated from her family and friends, she wrote to Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who referred her case to the American Civil Liberties Union. What began as a quiet love story between two quiet people quickly became a historic, upending journey to the United States Supreme Court.

In 2012, almost half a century after the ruling, Colin Firth and Ged Doherty of Raindog Films approached Jeff Nichols about turning the story into a narrative film. Firth and Doherty had seen Nancy Buirski's documentary about the couple's life *The Loving Story* (2011), but Nichols was stunned that he had never heard of the case. "It didn't make sense to me," Nichols says. "A story that seemed so relevant in terms of racial complexity and marriage equality: how are people not talking about this?"

When Nichols watched the documentary, he too was struck by the simplicity of the Lovings' tale. "Even though [the documentary] touches upon all these very crucial issues, it doesn't have anything to do with them. It kind of walks through the raindrops in terms of its social relevance," says Nichols. "Since they were so apolitical, since they didn't have an agenda, all you're left with at the end of the day, after thinking about all these complexities, is just two people who love each other. And it seemed like a great way to have a conversation about all these things."

By the time he came on board to direct *Loving*, Nichols had three critically acclaimed films under his belt: *Shotgun Stories* (2007), *Take Shelter* (2011) and *Mud* (2012), all original stories and all centred around white men or boys. As he sat down to write *Loving*, he faced a challenge he hadn't encountered before. "The outlining part of the process was very similar to the way I typically do things," Nichols says. "But then this other part came. I have the story laid out. I knew it would open with 'I'm pregnant' and I knew it would end with a photo of them. I typed Mildred into the computer and there's this blinking line,

HAND IN HAND
In Jeff Nichols's *Loving*, Ruth Negga and Joel Edgerton play Mildred and Richard Loving (right and below), who take on the US legal system after they are arrested in the middle of the night and given a one-year suspended sentence for breaking interracial marriage laws



and now I'm supposed to put words in her mouth. It was a bit paralysing because who the hell am I to do this?"

Between films, the "year-long meditation" the director usually spent creating scenes was replaced this time with meticulous research. Buirski, who is also a producer on the film, sent him a hard drive full of outtakes, interviews, and archival footage. He went to Virginia, where he met Peggy, the last surviving child of the Lovings, and visited the jail where the pair were held, the court where they were tried, the house where they lived in exile and the home Richard built for Mildred, all of which make it into the film. "At some point you have to accept the fact that I've done the work," says Nichols. "I understand the essence of these people in a specific way. And this is important, because all movies are fake: this is an interpretation – my interpretation – of who they were. And people are just going to have to understand that. And I'm going to have to understand that. I did all the work and now this is my understanding of them, as limited as that may be."

Another director might have eagerly circumvented these problems by turning *Loving* into a courtroom drama, given that the Lovings' fight, so to speak, is entirely domestic. Outside courtroom proceedings, they protested against their circumstances simply by living, and the film largely follows Richard and Mildred as they raise and provide for their children. Nichols's films often concern the domestic, and here he shied away from the easy choice of drama at the expense of nuance. "When the producers first came to me, one said, 'So who's our bad guy?' That's a great question to ask when you're making a movie. I said, 'I don't see one,'" says Nichols. Marton Csokas appears briefly as the cruel, bigoted sheriff, but he is not the primary antagonist. Instead, Nichols implicates institutional forces in the tragedy of Mildred and Richard, for in 1975, just eight years after legal restrictions on interracial marriage were declared unconstitutional, Richard would be killed when his car was struck by a drunk driver. "I started to think about time," says Nichols, "which is the cruellest part of their punishment. Time is robbed from them, especially when you realise how little time Richard Loving had left on this planet."

The film derives much of its tension from the apparent omniscience of law enforcement and the institutions that seek to control the Lovings. The danger they face is made clear from the moment the police burst in on the sleeping couple and drag them to jail in their nightclothes. Later, when they return to Virginia for Mildred to have their first child, the police arrest them again, hauling them to court just after Mildred has given birth. "It's really the social structure of Jim Crow that's the villain," says Nichols. "It lays this blanket over people and it says: 'We can come and get you anytime we want, for any reason we want, and you have to live under that.' You have to live under that constant threat. And

SOUTHLAND TALES
Ruth Negga (right) with Michael Shannon as *Life* photographer Grey Villet in *Loving*; and (below) with director Jeff Nichols on set

that's the insidious part of what these laws did and what they continue to do."

For all the danger that awaits them there, Mildred and Richard desperately seek to return to the South, specifically to the land Richard purchases for Mildred at the beginning of the film. Mildred, in particular, feels out of place in Washington and hankers for the South. "That was her home. Home meant something very integral to her being," says the director. Nichols, born and raised in Little Rock, Arkansas – when he was not spending summers in Altheimer, Arkansas, with his grandparents – thoroughly understands Mildred's Southern pride. "So many people, when they look at the American South, judge it as inferior and stupid and sometimes grotesque. And that's not true," says Nichols. "We have a legacy of pain and violence and brutality, but we also have a legacy of beauty and art and culture and rhythm that is unparalleled in the United States. When I think about American literature I think about Southern literature. And these aren't things to be looked down on, these are things to be understood. And there's a complexity there that if you dismiss too easily you're really doing yourself a disservice."

Nichols thought frequently of those summers in Altheimer and his grandparents, particularly his seamstress grandmother, while shooting *Loving*, which features several lingering close-ups of Richard and Mildred's hands. "These are people that work with their hands," says Nichols. "And their livelihood and their life is provided by those hands. And also, it's where we put our wedding rings. It's also how we reach out and communicate with each other." Nichols explains that he specifically wrote into several scenes the fact that the Lovings should be holding each other's hands. "It seems to be the frontlines of communication between two people."

The South has a legacy of pain and violence, but we also have a legacy of beauty and art and culture and rhythm that is unparalleled in the United States

While *Loving* presented several new challenges for the director, Nichols also felt his most confident on the film. "This was the first time that every assignment in the script from a directorial standpoint was an assignment I had done before," says the director. "I understood it in terms of how to light it or how to move a camera."

Loving became a somewhat welcome departure from the fast-paced action of his last feature *Midnight Special* (2016), for which Nichols's script had called for "flipping

over cars" and "blowing up gas stations". "So every day on set for *Midnight Special* was kind of like, 'Huh, how are we gonna do this?' Every day on set for *Loving* was, 'This is exactly how we're going to shoot this scene, and now let me sit with my actors and let's draw out the most precise performance we can,'" explains Nichols. "And that was really liberating because I just felt comfortable. I actually felt like a director for the first time. Usually I feel like a writer who is trying to figure out how to direct. And in this one, I think because the story is not my own, I felt more purely like a director than I ever had before."

Fittingly, the actors in *Loving* have earned widespread acclaim for their performances, particularly rising Irish-Ethiopian star Ruth Negga, who plays Mildred. Negga had been the first actress cast and the first, in fact, to read for the part. Australian actor Joel Edgerton, who worked with Nichols on *Midnight Special*, plays Richard. "Joel's performance is one that doesn't get talked about enough. One, because Mildred's is the active character, but if you know Joel, if you know how energetic he is, and gregarious, and talkative, all these things, he's completely the opposite of Richard Loving. There's a performance happening there," says Nichols. "Especially if you watch the documentary and see the movement and the voice of that man and what Joel did. It's impressive."

Also featuring in the cast, somewhat unexpectedly, is the comedian and actor Nick Kroll in a dramatic turn as Bernie Cohen, the Lovings' lawyer, and less surprisingly, Michael Shannon (who has appeared in all of Nichols's films) as *Life* magazine photographer Grey Villet. "I like working with the same people because you just get rid of a lot of the BS. You just show up and get to work. And you understand that they're there to do the work," says Nichols. "Michael Shannon is just one of the most talented actors in the world, and he's my friend, so I call him a lot."

Beyond that, Nichols concerned himself with securing the emotional impact of the film. "I always work on two tracks when I'm telling stories," says the director. "I work on a plot genre track on one hand and I work on a feeling, emotional track on another. And there are inspirations for each. My life is really the biggest inspiration. My relationship with my wife, my relationship with my son, my relationship with my friends or my brothers or my parents. This is what life's really made of. And if I'm going to make these films resonate with people, they have to be really specific to me. I don't think you get to people by thinking about what they might be thinking about or what they want. You get to people by thinking about who you are as a human."

***Loving* is released in UK cinemas on 3 February and is reviewed on page 80**

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WATCHING THE WATCHERS

'Cameraperson', Kirsten Johnson's poetic, meditative exploration of the moral pitfalls and complex artistry of nonfiction filmmaking, reflects on the lessons she's learned over the past two decades as one of the pre-eminent cinematographers in American documentary

By Sophie Mayer

"Observing people in the context in which they're under a great deal of pressure, we often see their humanity," says Kirsten Johnson. It's a neat manifesto for her practice as the leading American documentary cameraperson – for example, on Laura Poitras's exploration of the US whistle-blower Edward Snowden and the NSA spying scandal, *Citizenfour* (2014), which not only won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature, but drew potent attention to the ethics of media in an era of state surveillance. It was Johnson's second film with Poitras after *The Oath* (2010), about the Taliban and Guantánamo; they are now working on a third. She also shot Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering's *The Invisible War* (2011), a crusading indictment of rape in the US military, which was nominated for an Oscar the year before *Citizenfour*.

There's only one blink-and-you'll-miss-it reference to *Citizenfour* in *Cameraperson*, Johnson's career-spanning documentary: a sequence preceded by an intertitle stating '[Location Redacted]'. It shows, in close-up, a thumb drive being mixed into cement, and the cement spread to form a paving stone. The grey claustrophobia of the sequence from *Citizenfour* suggests how global digital surveillance risks erasing the specificity of our identities: the very quality that, *Cameraperson* suggests, defines documentary. All the other sequences in the film are identified by their location. Johnson loves the freedom of a big sky: images of clouds and shots from high vantage points – buildings, a Kabuli Ferris wheel – punctuate the film. So focused is Johnson on the places and people in front of the camera that, when filming the French philosopher Jacques Derrida crossing a New York street, she falls over backwards into traffic.

Showing the falls, sneezes, awkward silences, military checkpoints, hesitations, refusals, passing traffic and personal experience often eschewed by the finished documentaries from which she takes her material, Johnson

reinvents the documentary form by turning it inside out. "There is no one central question to this film," Johnson says. "It is a multitude. I wanted to make a film in which I was allowed to ask as many questions as I have and not answer them." *Cameraperson* offers no voiceover or authorial statement beyond the opening intertitle that asks the viewer to see it as Johnson's memoir.

Material from documentaries considered 'political', such as *Citizenfour*, is resignified through the inclusion of outtakes that brings them into the realm of the personal, but also through being intercut with Johnson's home movies of her mother; and of her father and her children after her mother's death. The inclusion of home movies positions it as 'first-person' documentary, to use the filmmaker Alisa Lebow's term, but also reframes all documentary as 'first person' by asserting the sensibility of the cinematographer.

At the same time, the film offers an intimate history of contemporary American political documentary shaped by a loosely affiliated network – affiliated, not least, by Johnson's work with Poitras, Dick and Ziering as well as Michael Moore and Dawn Porter. Her own film stresses documentary's never-more-urgent function of offering longform investigation and extensive oversight into complex issues, including war crimes (the PBS TV series *Women, War and Peace*, 2011), racism in America (Whitney Dow and Marco Williams's *The Two Towns of Jasper*, 2002) and the illegal invasion of Afghanistan (Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, 2004), all shot by Johnson and extracted in *Cameraperson*. The chillingly – and necessarily – oblique reference to *Citizenfour* underlines documentary's significance in combatting phenomena variously described as fake news, post-truth politics and the social media bubble, all of which have emerged from and furthered the economic decline of traditional news media.

"In the shorthand of certain kinds of news media and the reductiveness of stereotypes, we stop admitting to ourselves that everyone is a human being, but documentary fights the simplicity of a single narrative," Johnson says. *Cameraperson* suggests that it is now documentary, rather than newspapers, that can most effectively answer Juvenal's question, "Who will watch the watchers?" Making use of the campaigning documentaries on which she has worked rather than aligning herself with them, Johnson also uses *Cameraperson* to watch watchers other than the state.

First, there are the filmmakers with whom she has worked; the film makes judicious use of outtakes to reveal their strategies and ethics through offscreen conversations, as well as moments of anxiety and generosity off camera, such as when Moore follows up an interview for *Fahrenheit 9/11* by offering Corporal Abdul Henderson USMC legal assistance if his on-camera refusal to be redeployed results in military charges.

Johnson's portraiture of documentary subjects is also foregrounded, as faces, voices, stories and bodies register differently within *Cameraperson* than in the films from which the footage is taken. "When I ask the grandmother in Foca [in Bosnia] about fashion," Johnson argues in relation to a particularly touching conversation in which the older woman refuses to talk about her experiences during the conflict, "I'm rebelling against the narrative where she is depicted as just a victim of genocide: that is a disservice." Outtakes and cut material allow shots and sequences to run for longer, and because her subjects appear in vignettes removed from the arguments of their original films, they emerge as individuals, rather than instruments of an argument.

MOMENT OF TRUTH
Kirsten Johnson at work in Rwanda (opposite); the grandmother of the one Muslim family who remained in Foca, Bosnia (top), featured in 'I Came to Testify', shot by Johnson for the PBS series *Women, War and Peace*; and Aisha Bukar (above), a midwife in Kano, Nigeria, seen in *The Edge of Joy*, directed by Dawn Sinclair Shapiro

Forging such intense portraits from the landscapes of the original documentaries, Johnson offers oversight of a third group of watchers: us, documentary viewers, and our investment in concepts such as truth, authenticity, testimony, revelation, information – but also our reluctance to discern the ethical labour of selection and collation that might complicate such investments.

At the midpoint of the film, Johnson confronts the viewer directly with these questions. There is a sequence of landscapes without human subjects as points of view, from Karaman's House in Foca, Bosnia, which was used as a rape camp, to Camp X Ray in Guantánamo Bay, a prison where torture was deployed. The location and traumatic history of violence is given in subtitles, but it is Johnson's unwavering gaze and poetic editing that conveys the markedness of these places. Extracting these landscape shots from their narrative or expository setting, Johnson also draws on the viewer's knowledge of history, from the colonial massacre at Wounded Knee to the state-sponsored violence in Tahrir Square, demanding that we know – or learn – how to read these images.

"At a certain point we decided not to have voiceover in the film," Johnson recalls. "It became clear that we would have to put footage in a particular order so there were the necessary tools for the viewer to make sense of it." *Cameraperson* guides us to the grain of that reading through Johnson's level, and levelling, ethnographic eye for her 'home' culture in the US, in sharp contrast to the Othering history of documentary: a scene of a mosque in Herat, Afghanistan is followed by a dance sequence, in which a dozen white teenage girls in modest, ankle-length white tutus dancing around a tulle-draped six-foot high crucifix. It is simply titled 'Colorado Springs, Colorado', but might as well have been shot in the theocratic Republic of Gilead described in Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. Palpable in the

The film is about indicating how many more narratives are always possible. Each situation is so complex, there are many different stories that could be told that are true

Redit is the evangelical Christian white supremacy that has covertly driven Republican politics, connecting this airy dance studio to Afghanistan.

They are connected, too, by gender politics: the Colorado dancers adhere to religiously mandated modest dress codes and sexual purity rules; there is only one woman in the mosque, a young girl – excepting Johnson behind the camera, subject of a discomfited and wary look from one of the men at prayer. Earlier, Johnson had cut from a sequence of a witness talking about a rape camp in Bosnia, to State College, Pennsylvania, where a football game is underway in Beaver Stadium: the first home game after the college's former assistant football coach was charged with 52 counts of child sex abuse, again underlining that gender violence and inequality is endemic in US culture just as it is "over there". *Trapped*, Dawn Porter's 2016 documentary about the TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) laws, which place such burdensome requirements on medical practices as to render abortion almost impossible, affirms the necessity for American documentary to watch American legislators. This retrogressive prevention of access to medical care is contrasted with the grace under pressure of Aisha Bukar, a Nigerian midwife in Kano, consummately competent despite working without basic 20th-century medical supplies.

Cameraperson implies that Johnson measures her ethical decisions, and those of the filmmakers with whom she works, against those of other professionals: the midwife who has to save a late, weak twin; the Bosnian investigators who collect rape survivors' testimony; or the district attorney in the Texas murder case of James Byrd Jr. As Jasper County DA Guy James Gray ponders whether to show the camera the photo album of Byrd's injuries that was prepared for the jury, ethical reflection flows across the barrier of the screen: Gray's contemplation, held by the patient camera, becomes ours, inquiring into our investment in seeing images of terrible racist violence.

"I started the film from thinking about what had stayed with me and troubled me," Johnson says, pointing to what she'd filmed in Nigeria and the Texas courtroom. "They were images of terrible violence, questioning whose bodies get shown – often the bodies of the poor, and of brown people – and whose right it is to show those bodies. What are the ethics of working to create indelible images? Those are images that, by definition, scar people, and that's what I'm being asked to do."

The film directs its inquiries into our compulsion to look through its astonishing attention to the body: *Cameraperson* is the furthest thing from a talking-heads documentary. Here, in place of talking we see Gray's head bent over the photograph album, shielding it from the camera, or by the non-verbal eloquence with which the witness and investigators in Bosnia wield their cigarettes. Non-verbal communication is paramount, whether it's a young Kabuli boy demonstrating his vision loss from an explosion, or a young woman – her face never seen – communicating the anguish of an unplanned pregnancy through her fists clenching against her thighs.

"I wanted to raise questions about our relationship to the agency of the people that we film, whether it's possible to truly have people's permission or not; in many cases, their permission is compromised in how it is granted," Johnson says. "I'm implicating myself in the conundrum of this work of showing the lives of others by also showing my mother." In the film, her late mother Catherine, who had Alzheimer's, is shown exploring the Wyoming log cabin where she grew up. Johnson asks questions from behind the camera, keeping it fixed on her mother's unsteady gait and gestures, and on the waves of clarity and doubt that pass over her face.

Johnson, who describes her next project as director as "a comic documentary made with my father: he'll be in front of the camera, but we'll be collaborating," places herself in the film as the generational pivot between her mother and her own children, as she is the pivot between viewer and subject. She briefly, finally, appears on camera herself, as a daughter, when she lets her mother brush her hair. She is also perhaps measuring herself against, and paralleling herself with, her mother in these moments: the documentary-maker may be an ethical professional – but she is also a fallible and loved, if partial, guide, struggling toward truth. It is through this radical sense of doubt that *Cameraperson* offers its most profound testimony and radical stance against fake news and post-truth. "The film is about indicating how many more narratives are always possible," Johnson notes. "And they are all factual narratives. Each individual is so complex, each situation is so complex, there are many different stories that could be told that are true, and that's what I'm interested in, always paying attention to the details."

"Look at the baby looking," says the midwife in Nigeria as she places the first-born twin into a crib. If Johnson positions herself in relation to professionals whose unwavering gazes offer protection through their investigation of the worst of human behaviour, she also locates herself with the bright-eyed child observing the world cautiously and exuberantly, seeking such protection. There are children everywhere in *Cameraperson*, and they are not regarded as better seen than heard – even when they are playing with an axe on a family farm in Foca. Johnson's toddler twins look directly into the camera, and speak to the person behind it, the person they love and depend on. Through them, above all, *Cameraperson* asserts documentary as a practice – and documentation – of interdependence, of the connections between people, of our need for each other's care. Johnson's toddlers are the viewer's mirror: like the baby in Nigeria, we are learning how to look – and how, before the surveillance state renders it impossible, to speak about what we see, and how we are seen.

***Cameraperson* is released in UK cinemas on 27 January and is reviewed on page 72**

BEARING WITNESS
In *Cameraperson*, Johnson (pictured during the shoot of *Darfur Now*, 2007, above), dips into the extensive archive of footage she has shot during her career

LYNSEY ADDARIO / JANUS FILMS (1)

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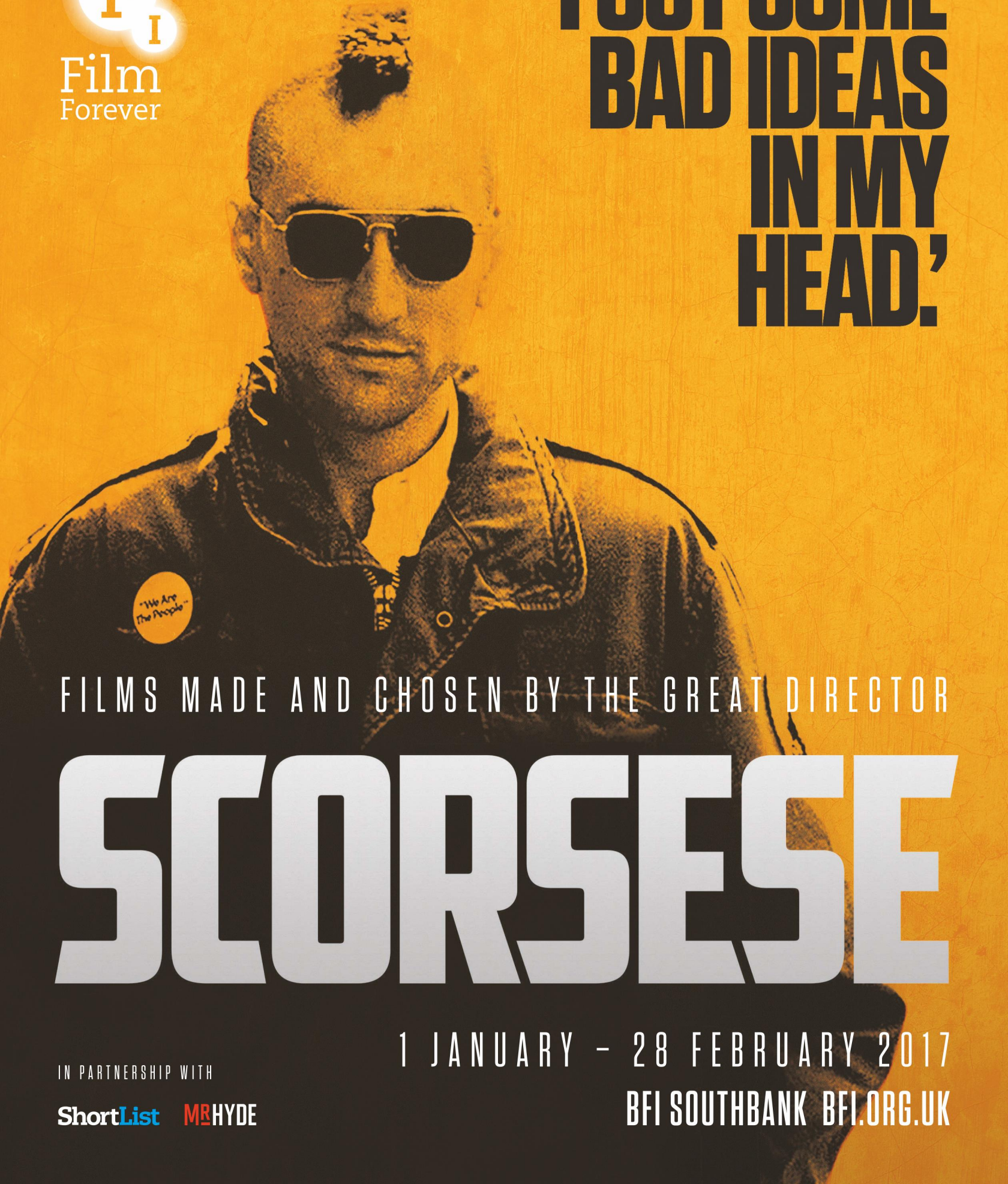
‘I GOT SOME BAD IDEAS IN MY HEAD.’



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THE LOST LORD OF ROMAINE

Howard Hughes has long been a figure of fascination for filmmakers, inspiring works by the likes of Max Ophuls and Martin Scorsese. Now Warren Beatty has followed in their footsteps, finally realising his decades-old dream of playing the eccentric billionaire, in his romantic comedy drama 'Rules Don't Apply'

By David Thomson

FLIGHT OF FANCY
Warren Beatty may be 79, but he plays Howard Hughes as a fiftysomething who has an affair with a twentysomething in *Rules Don't Apply* (above); the real Hughes (opposite)

If reclusion was what Howard Hughes wanted, *Rules Don't Apply* is a project he might have appreciated. As a show, it hasn't generated crowds or buzz. When the film opened in the US, on November 23 last year, first reports said that in some of its 2,300 theatrical outlets the daily revenue had nudged $60. Internet informants claimed they had been the only person in the theatre. With this sketchy hearsay, it was hard to decide whether theatres were deserted because so few remembered Howard Hughes... or because Warren Beatty, the film's writer, producer, director and actor, felt like an elderly newcomer, as shy as a starlet going on 80.

Not that Beatty seemed surprised by this, even if he had pushed for the 2,300 openings, instead of a more enticing three. Yes, he had been a champion narcissist and a legend once, as well as an esteemed businessman, but hadn't he often inclined towards a state of desert (or absence) that had had Howard Robard Hughes Jr as its ideal mirage? "How do you like doing interviews again?" someone asked Beatty as *Rules* opened. "I never did interviews," he replied. Nor had he acted on screen in 15 years, not since *Town & Country* (2001): estimated cost $90 million, putative revenue $10 million. Since then, he had been quiet, and a dad at home, though he had nursed the idea of a Hughes project for four decades. That went back to when Hughes was still apparently alive. Beatty said he had glimpsed the man once in a hotel lobby. Not that he'd spoken to him. By then, Hughes's actual existence was incidental to the gravitational influence he exerted. Like a black hole?

Hughes had died in 1976, and adherents of his cult wanted to believe he had expired in an aircraft bringing him back from the Acapulco Princess Hotel to the Houston Medical Institute. He had been depicted as a man apart, the unstable boss, but perhaps he was actually the tool of his own underlings. Still it

GETTY IMAGES (1)

It seemed appropriate that the impresario of *Hell's Angels* (1930), and the designer, the owner and the pilot of so many avant-garde aircraft had passed without having a foot on the ground. In so many ways, his capability had been negative: he had owned RKO, 1948-52, but driven that studio into inertia, despite doing *The Set-Up* (1949), *Stromboli* (1950) and *On Dangerous Ground* (1951); he had personally designed a miracle bra for Jane Russell in *The Outlaw* (1943), and then apparently forgotten the opportunities in removing it. He had, for years, kept a barber, Eddie Alexander, on the payroll in the event that he might need an emergency trim. He had even called Eddie in the small hours once just to check that his guy was ready. But Hughes never got the haircut. Indeed, well before that last flight, his hair was said to be unkempt and Rapunzel-like, to match his disabling, rococo fingernails. To which he might have snarled, "So how do you think I sign the cheques?" Good question: much money changed hands.

That was the deadpan asocial master imagined by Joan Didion in her essay, '7000 Romaine, Los Angeles 38', published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1967. Didion had noticed that address, in the flat lands between Sunset and Wilshire, close to where she lived then, amid warehouses and bungalows. It was a buff-coloured building, art deco from the late 20s, large but blank because the entrance was often boarded with chicken-wire. No one could tell, but the building seemed empty or idle, an unoccupied castle in a fairy tale, not sinister but not normal, vacant perhaps, or waiting to be reclaimed, if its owner remembered it. And yet, in 1974 (an uneasy year in America), there was a very professional break-in at Romaine – never solved or explained, but driven by some dark necessity in which many files disappeared from the archive.

Didion had been drawn to 7000 and its ghost and she took off on a great riff that belies the woman who would write so unsparingly later about her tragedies. As an observer, she is alert, very smart, and respectful of facts, but you know she also wants to believe in the occult, in magic and in men who are beyond being questioned. Lords who might do such whimsical things as buying up a Monopoly Las Vegas, making *Jet Pilot* (1957), wearing empty Kleenex boxes for slippers, or dwelling on a childhood sled – just to prove their power for doing such things and their nerve in ignoring logic or common sense. Hughes may have been inside 7000 Romaine, but he wasn't available. He had made it clear that daft power can absent itself and have the world wait on its return. He was Bartleby crossed with Kublai Khan. Such control can express itself in enormous fortunes, great armies and the seance called authority. Or it can leave a story unfinished, so that authorship seems sublime but obscure.

It's like Charles Foster Kane telling us at the start of his film, "Look, I'm going to die now. That's the first thing I'm going to do after I say 'Rosebud'. That's the only clue I'll give you, but I'll leave you wondering, just because wondering is the human response to mystery." 7000 Romaine was a shabby B movie version of Xanadu.

Didion was entranced by this cult, and she could theorise on its enchantment. Here's a striking moment in her testament: "That we have made a hero of Howard Hughes tells us something interesting about ourselves, something only dimly remembered, tells us that the secret point of money and power in America is neither the things that money can buy nor power for power's sake (Americans are uneasy with their possessions, guilty about power, all of which is difficult for Europeans to perceive because they are themselves so truly materialistic, so versed in the uses of power), but absolute personal freedom, mobility, privacy. It is the instinct which drove America to the Pacific, all through the nineteenth century, the desire to be able to find a restaurant open in case you want a sandwich, to be a free agent, live by one's own rules."

On reading that, you can surmise that Beatty had read Joan Didion, just as he may have talked to her at Los Angeles parties over the years, sharing a sandwich. He was thinking of Hughes for so long, waiting to be old enough to play him, until realising he was too old (Beatty now plays the man in his late fifties – an uncomfortable

MILLIONAIRE'S ROW Robert Ryan as the wealthy, Hughes-like Smith Ohlrig, with Barbara Bel Geddes in Max Ophuls's *Caught* (1949, above); Tommy Lee Jones in the TV production *The Amazing Howard Hughes* (1977, below); and Leonardo DiCaprio in Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator* (2004, above right)

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stretch). There was a moment (round about 1975's *The Fortune*) when Beatty looked like the Hughes who sat for Senate committees and told them to get lost. But the actor's amiable self-satisfaction, his soft-focus cosiness, was never likely to get the gaunt, Aspergian gaze that Hughes had in the 1930s. He was all pictures, planes and actresses in those days, borne on the confidence of obsession. Pick one of the three, it has to be planes.

In *The Aviator* (2004), Leonardo DiCaprio looked too callow for that gloomy guy, and then too full of self-pity when he broke down. But Scorsese did guess at Hughes's estrangement from ordinary reason and his belief that so many goals in life were as haunting and ridiculous as that Spruce Goose, the goofy bird that once flew for a mile in mockery of flight. In life, and in *The Aviator*, Hughes kept company with Katharine Hepburn. There had been press talk of their marrying in the late 30s, and even those who understood her aversion to sex and their shared preoccupation with fame suppose they must have gone to bed together sometimes. What else was there to do when he could not hear what she was saying, and she grew bored by his impeded aloofness? But history has still not grasped the devotion with which Hughes sponsored Hepburn, first to chase the role of Scarlett O'Hara and then to mount *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) for her.

Jason Robards is a sardonic scarecrow Hughes in *Melvin and Howard* (1980), a tumbleweed derelict picked up in the desert and perhaps the trigger to inheritance or a movie for an easygoing opportunist. Robards knew the photographs or the drawings of the ancient Hughes, the patient in penthouse suites who supposedly stored his own urine and watched *Ice Station Zebra* (1968). (In fact, the film he ran most often was Sternberg's *Shanghai Express* [1932]. He had taste?) But it hurts the believers in the legend to think the real Hughes was so deranged he feared his business associates might have him certified so that the corporate enterprises could pass into their hands.

That's the mouldy figment Clifford Irving conjured up and then challenged to make an appearance by writing a faux autobiography for him. But in 1972, when some thought he was too addled by codeine, Hughes gave croaky telephone proof of how humorless he might really be. Surely, a legendary Hughes would have slept through that hoax, letting it slip into dream. Irving was his kind of adventurer, with his lover Nina Van Pallandt as a cool Knightsbridge blonde offering dried apricots to cops and reporters. Don't we like to suppose that the Hughes on the end of that hoax would rather have vanished than reveal his matter-of-fact dullness? Wouldn't he have chosen an exit like that of the exposed father in *Mr Arkadin* (1955), leaving an empty aircraft circling in the air?

Max Ophuls's *Caught* (1949) offers an intriguing, harsh version of Hughes. Its neurotic millionaire, Smith Ohlrig (Robert Ryan), was a jab at the Hughes who had humiliated Ophuls by having him removed him from the wretched *Vendetta* (1950). With Arthur Laurents as writer, Ophuls developed a script loaded with Hughes's arbitrary behaviour. But Howard had to approve the script because RKO was loaning players for the Enterprise picture. One of them was Ryan, who was close enough to Hughes for the contradictory mogul to advise him on mad despot mannerisms – but to swallow that you'd have to believe that Hughes observed or understood himself.

In life, and in 'The Aviator', Hughes kept company with Katharine Hepburn. Most suppose they must have gone to bed together sometimes

Ohlrig is scary, and a prelude to our most disturbing Hughes, Tommy Lee Jones in *The Amazing Howard Hughes*, directed for television by William A. Graham in 1977. Jones was Texan; he had a concussed stare, full of a horror not to be uttered. That matched the impression left by the book *Empire*, the accumulation of research, done by Donald Barlett and James Steele, which conveys the bleak Hughes as a madman, a fusspot for routine, a codeine freak – not that codeine offered much kick, unless constipation turned you on. That Hughes was an invalid president manipulated by his hirelings, many of them Mormons, some of them skimming in all known directions, and hoping to keep the death-wish boss alive. That historical figure is so far from Joan Didion's insouciant outlaw of mysterious liberty as to make you weep.

But now here's Warren Beatty, in a leather jacket and an old fedora, absent-minded but crusty too, and ineffably sweet. It's not just that this venerable outcast in his own empire charms his unlikely discovery, Marla Mabrey (Lily Collins), a virgin from Virginia, which was Beatty's own birth state. More than that, lit up on her first drink, the girl reckons to seduce him. That's not his doing, the filming says. It's just that the impulsive young woman has got to have it – we may be reminded of how Beatty, decades ago, in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *Shampoo* (1975), could be the bewildered stud who didn't quite understand why women were so desperate to have sex with him. Not that he wasn't accommodating if they insisted. (It's like Humbert Humbert organising his story so that Lo relieves him of his literary hard-on.)

Better yet, their one plunge pays off because Marla gets pregnant, and soon there's a lively little boy in view. As far as we know, Hughes had no children (research and rumour never sleep), but *Rules Don't Apply* has an airy fondness, like a breeze coming off the screen, that lets us know being a dad has been a big thing for Warren and enough to make 80 feel brave, even if this new film is alone in the dark.

i ***Rules Don't Apply*** **is released in UK cinemas on 10 March, and will be reviewed in a future issue**

A WINTER'S TALE

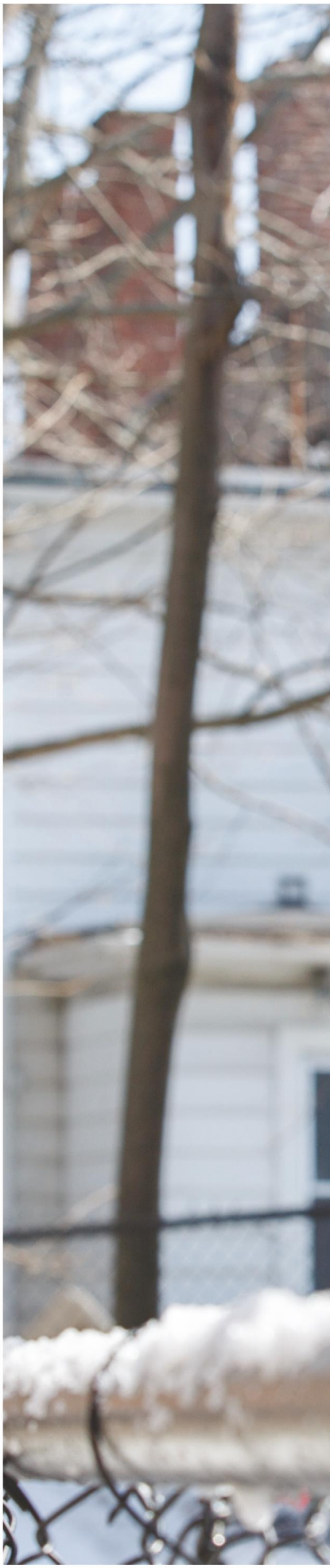
A middle-aged loner has to face his demons when he is drawn back to his old hometown to care for his nephew, in 'Manchester by the Sea', Kenneth Lonergan's intricate, understated and devastating portrait of a blue collar community haunted by tragedy

By Jonathan Romney

The term 'tip of the iceberg' comes to mind when watching Kenneth Lonergan's *Manchester by the Sea*. That is partly because his third feature is a very wintry film; featuring repeated shots of its protagonist shovelling snow, *Manchester* is a story about a man's life frozen in suspension, about a winter of the soul. But the film also makes us feel that, both in terms of its narrative and characters, we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg in the sense that what is shown on screen only partly lays bare the intricacies of this particular drama. Lonergan has made a film of great directness and simplicity that nevertheless constantly gestures at a larger complexity. *Manchester* has the feel of one of those elaborate, suggestive novels in which we know we have to work with the immediately available insights that we're given and fathom the rest for ourselves.

Set and partly shot in the Massachusetts coastal community that gives the film its name (Lonergan has removed the real town's hyphens), *Manchester by the Sea* is a family narrative that focuses on one family member. Its central character is Lee Chandler (Casey Affleck), seen early on as a morose janitor in a Boston apartment building, but also glimpsed in the opening shot in what proves to be a flashback, happily sailing on a boat with his brother Joe (Kyle Chandler) and Joe's young son Patrick (played as a child by Ben O'Brien). In the intervening years, something has happened to change Lee from the effusive, confident fellow of the boat trip into a taciturn loner, his emotions on a knife edge. In one scene, he shies away from a promising encounter with a young woman in a bar, instead starting a fight there, driven by hair-trigger nerviness and/or self-hatred; it's consistent with what we subsequently learn about his background, a working-class community in which assertive maleness is predominant, as seen in the bullish Joe and in Patrick, whose main pursuit as a narcissistic teenager will be to keep his two girlfriends on tap.

In a narrative punctuated by flashbacks, we see Lee in the present, summoned back to his home town, where Joe has died of a heart condition, and where Lee is a figure of notoriety, for shocking reasons revealed some time later. Patrick's mother Elise (Gretchen Mol) is long off the scene, whereabouts unknown, so it falls to Lee to look after the boy – now a teenager (an impressive Lucas Hedges) abrasively resistant to Lee's help, in denial about his father's death and seemingly concerned



COLD COMFORT
Much of the power of Casey Affleck's performance comes from the great restraint he shows in his portrayal of Lee Chandler, a Boston janitor scarred by events in his past, in Kenneth Lonergan's *Manchester by the Sea*

only with his own pleasure. It's only gradually – most notably through a devastating extended flashback that reveals the traumatic event in Lee's life – that we also discover what has happened to Lee's ex-wife Randi (Michelle Williams), who, like Elise, will return to the scene as a radically transformed figure.

Narrative intricacy apart, *Manchester by the Sea* might easily register at first sight as a classic American mainstream take on emotional drama: unproblematic Sundance realism. Yet Lonergan is grappling with the complex unmanageability of human experience in a way that is both sensitive and generous, attending to his characters' fine shadings without foregrounding his own stylistics, which are modestly downplayed. It would be wrong to dismiss *Manchester* as either conventional or lacking in authorial signature. It's worth remembering that Lonergan is both a filmmaker and a renowned playwright, and *Manchester* is theatrical in a very particular way. The inclusion of several precisely composed tableaux – for example, around Joe's hospital bed, or a men's beer-and-snooker get-together – gives the impression that we are only seeing people when they are on stage, as it were, directly involved in the drama. That makes us all the more curious about what happens to them when they – often abruptly and puzzlingly – retreat off stage, out of the picture. Elise is central to an early scene in which she storms out of Joe's hospital room on learning he has a congestive heart condition. After that, she is sporadically seen in other flashbacks, but remains conspicuously absent from the present drama. It's only when she reappears that we learn the history of her existence elsewhere; the same goes for Randi, when she eventually re-enters the picture.

Such density of implied information also makes *Manchester* a highly novelistic film: it's crammed with narrative data, but most of it is focused through the experience of Lee, leaving much for us to read between the lines. Lonergan's capacious attitude to narrative was clearly evident in his last film, *Margaret* (2011), released theatrically in a 150-minute cut that Lonergan has disavowed, and on DVD in his approved, much more resonant extended version. In that film, New York teenager Lisa (Anna Paquin) has, like Lee, a traumatic experience, although in her case, the drama concerns her role in an event that more closely affects the lives of others; the repercussions of this event, especially on Lisa's psyche, are *Margaret*'s central focus, but the film is also rich in glimpses into the lives of background characters, as well as eavesdropped snatches of conversations between unidentified bystanders in the streets and diners of Manhattan.

Lonergan is grappling with the complex unmanageability of human experience in a way that is both sensitive and generous

SEEN AND NOT HEARD
Kenneth Lonergan (below, with Affleck on set) talked through with his actors numerous details of their characters' past experiences that are not revealed on screen, helping to capture this unspoken history in their performances

Manchester displays a different kind of complexity, its flashbacks allowing Lonergan to dole out information in his own good time. This also facilitates the slow revelation of the characters themselves. Notably, it is through the extreme reserve of Casey Affleck's performance – all the more resonant because so contained – that the drama of Lee's crisis emerges, as we come to understand the causes and symptoms of his psychic damage. In my interview with Lonergan below, he raises interesting questions about the nature of the collaboration of actors and directors and about certain conceptions of character. Critics (myself included) are often sceptical about the traditional American notion that a character's off-screen biography, including many events never even hinted at in a narrative, is integral to the building up of that character. The invocation of a backstory may sometimes seem bizarrely redundant: why should it matter to us what happened to a fictional character at their tenth birthday party?

But Lonergan makes a very good case for the importance of talking through with his actors the unseen part of a character's history. That history may not be referred to explicitly in the script, or made overt on screen, but Lonergan's in-depth discussions with his cast allow those elements to inflect performances, amplifying an actor's understanding of what a character is, both when we see them and when we don't. It explains a lot, for example, about the way that Mol plays Elise both when she is a much-disparaged family member living in Manchester, and when she has become a very different woman much later in life.

In Rebecca Mead's recent highly revealing portrait of Lonergan in the *New Yorker*, Mark Ruffalo – who starred in the director's memorable debut feature *You Can Count on Me* (2000) – talks about how Lonergan's work with actors manifests itself on screen. For Ruffalo, watching Lonergan's films puts us in the position of "watching an actor think... Under the words there are another ten thousand words – we only see one pop up to the surface." Indeed, there is no transcendental hidden mystery in Lonergan's films, nothing hinted at that we aren't capable of discerning for ourselves, but what is very much present is a resonant unsaid – an unsaid formed by a sensitive and insightful process of negotiation between writer and director. That's what, in *Manchester by the Sea*, forms the meaning that slowly thaws from beneath the surface of the script.

Jonathan Romney: One thing that makes this film an anomaly in current US cinema is that it's about something people don't normally want to go to the cinema to see a film about – a character's depression.

Kenneth Lonergan: I don't think of Lee as depressed – I think he's traumatised but he also doesn't want to engage. He's got this immense painful burden to carry, more than anyone should have to carry. He's trying to get through every day without collapsing or disintegrating. I see him as very actively coping with this disaster that befell him – not the most successful way of coping

BLOOD TIES
In a complex narrative punctuated by flashbacks, Kyle Chandler (above) plays Joe, the brother of Affleck's Lee (above left with his ex-wife Randi, played by Michelle Williams)

with it, but he's functional, he has a job, he goes to work, he shows up, he's available to help out when there's an emergency. And then when the demands become greater than he's capable of answering, that's when the story starts to move in a different direction.

JR: But you also suggest, which is also rare in American cinema, that there isn't really any possible resolution to his dilemma. You give us an open ending, but we sense that he's likely to carry his burden forever.

KL: Yes. How do you move on from that? I don't like the Hollywood idea: "It's all OK." In *The Lion King* [1994], the father dies but he's up in the sky and he can talk to him all the time. My father died last year; I'm never going to talk to him. So unless you believe in a life after this one, which I don't... And even if you do, it's a hard belief to hold on to in the face of absence of your loved ones. It's such an important part of being a human being – why skirt around it in fiction?

On the other side, I personally don't get a lot out of movies or books that are there to rub your face in a reality that the author feels you don't get. I'm not here to tell everybody, "Life is miserable, wake up" – that would be very arrogant and presumptuous of me. But I do think that cinema can be a function of serious things, without being a brutalising, in-your-face life lesson.

JR: One thing that's very true to life about the film is that things happen to people in front of our eyes, but things also happen to them while they're elsewhere and we don't see them. So Elise and Randi go away, and their life changes in certain ways – and when we see them again, they're completely different people.

KL: As you get older, people pop in and out of your life and it's fascinating to see what happens to them and to wonder what they're thinking happened to you in the interval. That's one thing that's so great about actors, that they're always thinking about these things. With Gretchen and Michelle, who play characters we meet again after five years, I had a lot of discussions about what's happened to them in between and where they've been – none of which is in the script, but [we were] doing that work in forms of behaviour in scenes that are in the script and in the film. The effect is very powerful.

I very rarely modify the script [as a result of discussions with actors]. I have to be completely confident in the script to get it to the next stage. I don't think on my feet fast enough so I try to write the script, and if I like it I trust it and everyone's working off the same document. But the [characters'] behaviour changes all the time because the actors bring so much to it, and no one winds up with exactly what was in my head when I was writing it.

JR: Most of these characters aren't sympathetic in any conventional sense. They're irascible, they're self-absorbed, the son is in denial about his father and mainly concerned with his own desires. You make them all fairly abrasive, which flies in the face of what script manuals tell us.

KL: The script manuals are all wrong about everything. I don't think much of characters that are paper tigers – what's the point of creating some bad man or lady who I then show the hero getting the better of? Most people are rather difficult once you get to know them, and some people are difficult straight away. The question is: are they interesting enough, alive enough, to want to spend some time with? Gretchen Mol gives an amazing performance – her scenes are short and hard to do and they're very full. Her character is very complicated and you feel very bad for her – she can't even handle one simple lunch, her well-being is so tenuous. Even when she's being so selfish and awful in the hospital at the beginning, she's just feeling picked on. We talked a lot about what her identity is in the Chandler family – she's the 'crazy drunk'. Anyway, there's just a lot of background, and none of it's in the dialogue, it's all in the behaviour.

JR: For your score, you've chosen a lot of classical music that establishes quite a detached tone, some of which already has a history in cinema – like the Albinoni Adagio in G Minor.

KL: That sequence was very hard to edit, even with my brilliant editor [Jennifer Lame]. Then one day we tried the Albinoni – I can't think of anything else that combines the elements of inevitability and sadness and size and melancholy – it's the big flashback in the film, it starts with Lee walking, it has this measured quality, and then the violins come in with this incredible descending curtain of sadness, but there's also a size to it that seems more than human. It's used beautifully in Peter Weir's *Gallipoli* [1981] and Werner Herzog uses it [in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, 1974]. It makes everything you put under it seem great and sad – it was a cheap trick [*laughs*], but once we had it in there it worked so well. It's ten minutes of footage and it goes from walking to the store to coming home to the disaster to the aftermath to the police station... It just goes on and on, so I really needed something big and it worked perfectly.

***Manchester by the Sea* is released in UK cinemas on 13 January and is reviewed on page 81**

'RISK-TAKING IS ESSENTIAL'

Michelle Williams's extraordinary ability to bring raw emotion to psychologically knotty dramas has assured her place as one of the finest actors of her generation

By Isabel Stevens

Michelle Williams doesn't do the normal serious actor thing of interchanging big Hollywood roles with indie ones. She mainly just does the 'small' films. The list of directors and films she has picked over the years is impressive: Wim Wenders (*Land of Plenty*, 2004), Ang Lee (*Brokeback Mountain*, 2005), Todd Haynes (*I'm Not There*, 2007, and the forthcoming *Wonderstruck*), Charlie Kaufman (*Synecdoche, New York*, 2008), Martin Scorsese (*Shutter Island*, 2010) and Sarah Polley (*Take This Waltz*, 2011) among others. Even while playing siren-next-door Jen in the television teen drama *Dawson's Creek* (1998-2003), her eye for a good script led her to Tom McCarthy's *The Station Agent* (2003) and Sandra Goldbacher's *Me Without You* (2001).

More recently, working with American writer-director Kelly Reichardt has produced some of Williams's most subtle performances, playing women who don't normally get screen-time: a drifter in *Wendy and Lucy* (2008), a resilient settler in neo-western *Meek's Cutoff* (2010) and a woman struggling to find domestic bliss, in Reichardt's latest *Certain Women*.

Williams has been heralded for her ability to bring raw emotion to psychologically knotty dramas, such as *Manchester by the Sea* (the film's director Kenneth Lonergan told *Variety*: "There is nothing small or delicate about the volcano of feeling she has on tap"). In the film she plays Randi, the ex-wife of Casey Affleck's withdrawn janitor Lee. The couple have been out of touch since a tragedy tore their family apart and now, years later, they have to face each other again.

Isabel Stevens: Kenneth Lonergan has said he wanted to work with you ever since he saw you 15 years ago on stage in Mike Leigh's play *Smelling a Rat*.

Michelle Williams: I've wanted to work with Kenny for a decade. Sometimes I think a lot of acting is just about being patient. Hang in there for long enough and good things will come. I'd done a reading of one of his plays. His dialogue is really easy to believe in. It's very pleasurable to work with and to inhabit his worlds because they ring so true. I'd read the script and then we got together and I was so grateful to him for offering me the part that I cried.

IS: How do you approach reading a script for the first time?

MW: The first time you read something is the most important. If I think it has potential, I really carve out a lot of time to sit with it and not just rush. I really like to read scripts in the bath. It's like my little office. I have a little pile of scripts next to my bath.

IS: You're very selective about the roles you take on. For example, you rarely do 'big' Hollywood films on the side like many actors do.

MW: I never understood that mentality. It's just not for me. The truth is if I don't love something, I'll be terrible in it. I can't fake it. The reason I go to work is to support my family. If I didn't have to, I would be very happy to stay at home. Having kids is the most creative endeavour possible. But I have to support us. And this is the only job I know. I have to feel passionate about something. I have to feel like it justifies the time out of my normal life to warrant the kind of time and effort and attention it's going to take.

Wendy and Lucy

IS: Even though you're only in a handful of scenes, your role as Randi in *Manchester by the Sea* is a very demanding one.

MW: Because my part is really quite small there's a lot of information that's not in the script as she doesn't appear. So I thought a lot about the passage of time. And I really thought about how someone moves on after a great tragedy. How someone makes the choice to stay alive and to allow themselves to heal. That is the thing that moved me to tears. Thinking about the human bravery that it would require for a woman to cleave to life after a tragedy like this. And then to open herself up to not just survival, but happiness. Who is someone who lives through this and then gets to the point where she can fall in love again and have another family? Who can do that? She's a superhero.

IS: Randi changes a lot. Her appearance is much more polished towards the end of the film.

MW: I thought a lot about her physical appearance. It was something I came to Kenny with. I said, this is my idea: in the beginning I want her to feel really messy and real and natural, like someone who's smack in the middle of their life, has three kids, doesn't have time to go to the salon to do her roots; she isn't self-conscious in any way. She has a really combative and funny, expressive and sexy relationship with her husband. They clearly love each other. They've got three kids. They're doing it all the time. They have a really alive, sparky, loud life together. It's great. I thought she loses all of that. In that intervening time, she first had to make the choice not to kill herself and then she had to be brought back to life.

I'd read about these women – and I'm not comparing these women to her – who were victimised by the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. How they brought them back to life was by teaching them how to

Michelle Williams as Gina Lewis in Kelly Reichardt's *Certain Women*

Good grief: Williams in her brief but extremely challenging role as Randi in *Manchester by the Sea*

care for other people and for themselves. It started really simply by brushing their teeth, combing their hair. I thought that after a great tragedy like that, it's almost like a stroke, you have to relearn how to live. I wanted to show that what used to be natural and what she used to take for granted now takes extraordinary effort.

IS: The scene in which Randi and Lee talk about the past is the most devastating in the film. The lines are so loaded.

MW: I was intensely prepared. It's a very precise scene. There's a lot of overlapping words. And you need to make it feel like it's happening for the first time. Waiting to shoot it was like doomsday. The trailer I had on the set was about the size of a couch and I remember sitting in my cell for them to come get me. It got pushed to the end of the schedule because Casey [Affleck] and I, and Kenny, just didn't want to go through it. But it's equal parts dread and excitement. It's a scene when you read the script that you think, 'Wow I can't believe I get to play that scene,' but also, 'I don't know if I can do that.'

IS: You've been acting for more than 20 years. Has your approach to it changed?

MW: Now I'm in my mid-thirties, I feel more comfortable. I'm not quite as shy. I'm more likely to offer ideas. Directors

When you read the script you think, 'Wow I can't believe I get to play that scene,' but also, 'I don't know if I can do that'

really want collaboration. When I first started I thought they were going to give me a magic key; I was waiting for them to unlock something inside me. And then they are actually looking at you thinking, "I hope you have the magic key, that's why I hired you, that's what you're here for."

Risk-taking is essential. If you play it safe you just do the same thing over and over again and you'll get bored. And people are going to get bored of you. Of course you worry that you'll make mistakes, that people will judge you. And sometimes they do. And sometimes – like with Kenny – they don't. He's the exact right person to risk being foolish around. He knows he'll be around for the good thing that follows.

I remember in *Wendy and Lucy*, I had the idea that Wendy have a little limp. And Kelly was like, "No, I don't think so, why are you suggesting that?" And I thought, "Maybe there's just something secret, something that happened that we don't know about." And Kelly liked that and said, "Just keep thinking and get back to me." And I was like, "Okay, a limp, a cast." And then I thought, "What about a bandage, like an Ace bandage?" She said yes. And then my character wore an Ace bandage around her ankle. We never talked about why or what it was. It's just a detail. But it started by taking a risk and exposing a bad idea.

IS: There's a long list of male directors who regularly work with the same actors and actresses but there are very few actresses who have creative partnerships with female directors, but you have that with Reichardt. *Certain Women* is your third film with her.

MW: You're right! It's another film where so much is left unsaid, especially in my section. I guess my greatest ambition is that Kelly would still be interested in me and want to work with me again. Something that's so important is to know what your director likes. To know what kind of world they are creating. So you can be the best inhabitant of it. I really worked to understand what that is for Kelly. Now I just trust her. And she knows me so well. She just looks at me and I know what she wants.

i ***Certain Women* is released in UK cinemas on 3 March and will be reviewed in our next issue**

JOURNEY INTO FEAR

Based on an award-winning novel that aims to help children come to terms with the death of a relative, Juan Antonio Bayona's visually spectacular 'A Monster Calls' is an unashamedly emotional examination of grief that never resorts to easy sentimentality

By Mar Diestro-Dópido

LOVE AND DEATH
In *A Monster Calls*, 13-year-old Conor O'Malley (Lewis MacDougall) has to find a way to deal with his young mother's terminal illness, bullying at school and the abyss of loneliness that seemingly lies ahead

We've all been there once upon a time, somewhere round the age of eight, let's say, hiding under the sheets holding on for dear life and staring at the door, waiting for who knows what to come through it. The monster that kept visiting Spanish director Juan Antonio Bayona at night and threatening to knock his bedroom door down was none other than Jack Nicholson's Jack Torrance from *The Shining* (1980).

Bayona's latest feature, *A Monster Calls*, is an unashamedly emotional fantasy drama in which a monster, three fairytales and the bitter taste of a death in the family are brought together in the life of 13-year-old Conor O'Malley (Lewis MacDougall), as he attempts to come to terms with his young divorced mother's terminal illness, bullying at school and the abyss of loneliness that seemingly lies ahead. His encounter with a monster in the shape of the millennial yew tree that lies outside the family house will help him find his own truth, and a way to alleviate his pain.

A Monster Calls also brings to a close what the director has referred to as an accidental mother-and-child/death trilogy, and shares more than a touch of both Bayona's previous films' DNA – the horror element of *The Orphanage* (2007) and the painstakingly recreated family drama of *The Impossible* (2012). All three share a very particular take on the family, in which the central mother figure is an indefatigable fighter with personality to burn – apparently somewhat like Bayona. But where *The Orphanage* was a masterclass in gothic suspense and *The Impossible* a high-octane, CGI-heavy drama based on a true survival story, in *A Monster Calls* emotions are very much worn on the sleeve, yet also skilfully dissected and firmly rooted in reality. In *The Impossible* every arduous step Naomi Watts took in her tsunami ordeal was underscored by Fernando Velázquez's (*Crimson Peak*) overly sentimental soundtrack; by contrast, the monster's visits in the new film are more often accompanied by silence.

A Monster Calls is Bayona's second project in English, this time based on an award-winning British novel. The idea for it was conceived by the writer and human rights activist Siobhan Dowd – who campaigned to bring literature and reading to children and marginalised communities. She originally imagined the story as an emotional purging of sorts: a tool to help children understand and cope with the loss of a relative. Dowd herself died of cancer, aged 47, before being able to fully realise her idea, and it was the novelist Patrick Ness, the writer of the young adult trilogy 'Chaos Walking', who took over and completed the novel. Having adapted his book into a film script, Ness then worked closely with Bayona – the latter's only addition was the film's beautiful epilogue, which ties everything together and emphasises creativity as a way of setting your inner self free.

Despite its British literary roots, *A Monster Calls* is a Spanish-US co-production. "It's very interesting what is happening right now," Bayona says. "There are a lot of very compelling scripts in the US, and in the international market, which the studios are not daring to produce, and which are instead being produced in Europe. This is one such script." Factor in, too, what Bayona describes as the "deeply contradictory situation affecting Spanish cinema right now, caught between the economic barriers erected by the state and the enormous creative potential which never ceases to emerge". The outcome of this is that local talent either seeks money outside Spain, or is itself being sought by the international market – hence the expanding number of genre-oriented projects in English, which are European in flavour, such as Alejandro Amenábar's *The Others* (2001), Juan Carlos Fresnadillo's *28 Weeks Later* (2007), and Jaume Collet-Serra's *The Shallows* (2016).

To some extent, of course, this is old news. A number of Bayona's own film heroes trod the same path, such as Roman Polanski (*Rosemary's Baby*, 1968), Ridley Scott (*Alien*, 1979) and the legendary cinematographer Néstor Almendros – another Spaniard who, after working in Europe, with François Truffaut and Eric Rohmer, ended up in the US shooting classics such as *Days of Heaven* (1978) and *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979); and Ernst Lubitsch, Milos Forman and Fritz Lang went before them. *Amélie*'s Jean-Pierre Jeunet brought back to the Old Continent one of *Alien*'s spin-offs, while Bayona's next project is the latest instalment in one of Hollywood's biggest franchises, *Jurassic Park*, backed by the director's childhood hero Spielberg – "something fun to do after such an intense cycle," as he puts it, and which will, of course, bear the director's personal stamp.

A Monster Calls is littered with homages to classics such as *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957), *Moby Dick* (1956) and *King Kong* (1933/1976). But it also clearly draws on a long tradition of Spanish horror films centred on childhood, from Víctor Erice's child-monster relationship in *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973) to Chicho Ibáñez Serrador's *Who Can Kill a Child?* (1976) and, in particular, Carlos Saura's *Cria cuervos* (1976), in which the young girl protagonist refuses to let her recently deceased mother go. Through her, Saura similarly explores a child's anger around maternal loss; except in this case, it

drives her to fantasise that she has actually poisoned her father, whom she holds responsible for the death of her mother (played by Bayona favourite Geraldine Chaplin, who has appeared in all three of his features so far).

Underpinning all these cinematic touchstones and references lies a genuine passion for stories. "Something I became very interested in after making [two episodes of TV series] *Penny Dreadful* for Showtime was storytelling. I had read Bruno Bettelheim's famous 1976 book *The Uses of Enchantment*, where he applies psychoanalysis to fairytales, as well as Joseph Campbell's work." Analysing stories just as you would dreams was a revelation to Bayona: "What really drove me to make this film is that it actually is a reflection on storytelling," he says.

A Monster Calls is what you might call Dickensian in its structure: not unlike *A Christmas Carol*, the narrative revolves around three nocturnal visits, in this case, from the monster tree at exactly 12:07am. On each occasion Conor is told a fairytale – rendered in animated form – but there's a catch, as these will be rounded off by a fourth one that will be the most frightening of all, the one in which he reveals his own truth. As Bayona explains, "The film is as faithful to the book as it can be. I did my own interpretation of it, the same way Ness interpreted in his own way Siobhan's original idea. And this is what I'm interested in, taking a story and finding oneself in it. This is what Conor needs to do: he has to find his own truth and be able to express it, an idea that is present throughout the film."

A Monster Calls is quite consciously an anti-climactic horror film, with a monster that is by no means scary (Conor's first impassive words to the monster are, "I've seen worse things"), three fairytales whose muddled morality is very far from black and white, and an outcome known to all except Conor himself. In addition, Bayona's solid treatment of family emotional dynamics, and the decision to make Conor's catharsis into an artistic one, sets *A Monster Calls* apart from more conventional Hollywood narratives and brings it close to the complex treatment of a child dealing with a mother's death in *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006). This is, of course, no accidental comparison, since Guillermo del Toro was Bayona's mentor on *The Orphanage*; but it is to the Spaniard's credit that he has managed to create a recognisable world of his own, one in which stories, as Del Toro himself has put it, are the tools to articulate our world.

More than language, the real challenge in *A Monster Calls* was cultural. "I am very used to a more Mediterranean kind of family where the figure of the mother is central, so there are characters such as Sigour-

This is what I'm interested in, taking a story and finding oneself in it. This is what the lead protagonist needs to do: he has to find his own truth and be able to express it

ney Weaver's grandmother who are complicated to understand from that point of view. Her severity and coldness is something I discussed endlessly with Patrick Ness, until we realised that it is something intrinsic to Anglo-Saxon culture." Weaver's character – sporting an RP English accent and metaphorically represented by the wall-mounted clock she painfully adjusts every day and which Conor smashes to pieces – is definitely the bad witch of the tale. She is the mother who suppressed the creativity of the boy's mother's (Felicity Jones) , and who happens to be Conor's next of kin, since his father (Toby Kebbell) – described by Bayona as "seemingly the nicest of all the characters, yet also the most cowardly" – has set up another family in Los Angeles and matter-of-factly refuses to take Conor with him. As in fairytales, nothing is what it seems, for as Bayona points out, "All the characters are based on an inner contradiction, which is how the film works structurally. The monster is monstrous but also the solution; the grandma is the witch but also companionship; Conor's mother is trying not to hurt him but is hurting him the most by not telling him the truth." And there's also Conor's refusal, yet desperate need, to hear that truth.

Weaver's witchlike grandma may be very Anglo-Saxon, but the way unleashed passions are expressed seems very Mediterranean. In fact, at crucial moments of emotional intensity, Bayona would tell the actors to "go for the Latin take"; or he'd nurture them "until they came out of their comfort zone" – he's previously spoken about using music to facilitate this, as Charlie Chaplin did. Or, in the case of MacDougall, withholding information so that, for example, he never had access to the door that he opens at the end of the film, even though the other actors and crew would pass through it on a daily basis – enabling the boy to be genuinely amazed when he finally did.

It is this desire to capture authentic expression that distinguishes *A Monster Calls* as a Bayona film rather than another tear-jerking corporate blockbuster; and which, perhaps more importantly, grounds its fantastic side in ordinary experience. As Bayona notes, the risk with this type of film is that the story itself gets drowned out by the technical aspect, "so as a director I have to break away from that and stick to the script". *A Monster Calls*, for all its big budget, stars and special effects, still feels small-scale, intimate and, above all, ancient. The sense of age is embodied by a monster that takes the shape of a centuries-old yew tree, warmly but sternly voiced by Liam Neeson. For the beautifully rendered 3D design, Bayona went back to Jim Kay's original illustrations in Ness's book, in which he's merely a black silhouette – standing in for what the director refers to as "the darkest side of Conor's psychology", the man he's going to be.

Bayona worked with children on *The Orphanage* and *The Impossible*, but they did not have to bear the film on their shoulders as the emotionally exhausted Conor does; and the director has managed to tease out something far more authentic and complex in MacDougall's performance. The casting drew in almost a thousand young boys, "who all played the most emotional sequences with tears, whereas Lewis was the only one who played them with genuine rage instead". Once again, it is the recourse to anger and silence in dealing with the cruelty of Conor's situation that allows Bayona to avoid falling into the more overtly sentimental tone of *The Impossible*.

Visually, *A Monster Calls* is stunning thanks to the DP Oscar Faura (*The Imitation Game*) and production designer Eugenio Caballero (*Pan's Labyrinth*, *The Limits of Control*), both of whom have worked with Bayona before. They not only move smoothly from reality to 3D to animation and back, but manage to create a thoroughly rounded sensorial portrait of Conor's world, in which soil and roots can almost be smelt, and rage, pain and loneliness become tactile.

But it is the three animated fairytales embedded in the film that really steal the show. Produced by Headless Productions in Barcelona, this stop-motion animation, which gives the impression of being created with watercolours, functions in the story as a threshold between Conor's reality and his imagination, becoming progressively more real as Conor learns to accept of the truth of his deepest feelings, his seemingly monstrous emotions. Bayona was adamant he didn't want real actors to perform in the three tales; the emphasis in constructing the animated entities had to be on what each represented, not their personalities, which ultimately meant they don't have faces – or rather, that they can have any face. For childhood fears and loss are both deeply personal and inescapably universal; they never go away, they simply transform into yet another form. The monster is always lurking behind the door.

***A Monster Calls* is out now in UK cinemas and is reviewed on page 83**

It is this genuine desire to capture authentic expression that distinguishes 'A Monster Calls' as a Bayona film rather than another tear-jerking corporate blockbuster

THE TREE OF LIFE
***A Monster Calls* relies on brilliant 3D design (above right), but Juan Antonio Bayona (above left) was determined the story should not be drowned out by the film's technical aspects**

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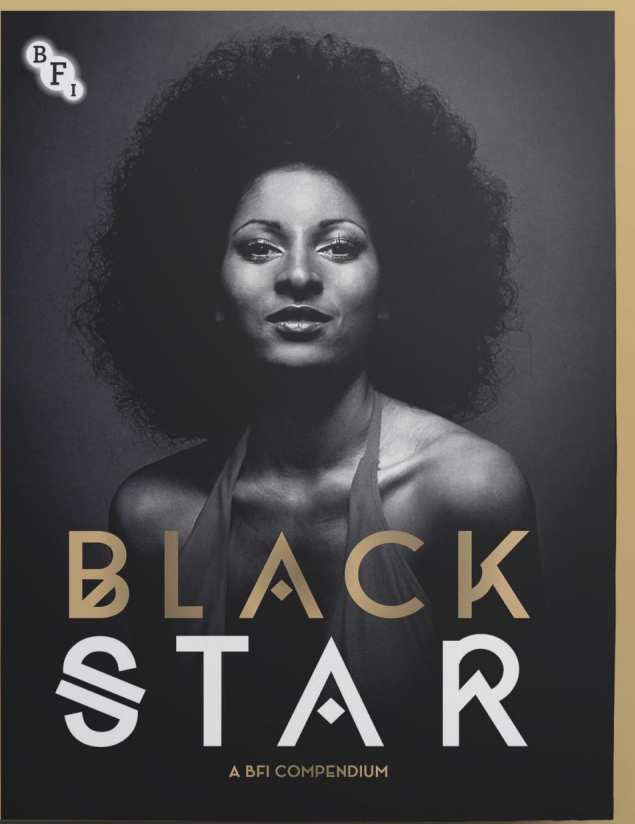

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ARTISTS' MOVING IMAGE

SPECTACULAR TENTACULAR

Philippe Parreno's installation in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall dissolves cinema and recreates it in marvellous new forms

By Laura Staab

In the past, the audiovisual works of the French artist Philippe Parreno carried out an iconological research project of sorts: dissecting the regime of the modern image, and the way it constructs certain stars. For instance, *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006, created in collaboration with Douglas Gordon) tracks the footballer Zinedine Zidane for the full 90 minutes of a match, via an orchestra of 17 synchronised cameras – transfixed by Zidane. The directors might be male but the film's manner is more fangirl.

This near-reverential vision is reversed in *Marilyn* (2012), though Parreno's interest in celebrity evidently persists. The video observes Marilyn Monroe's hotel suite in 50s New York, empty. Where *Zidane* is an anatomical study, here the actor's ever-recycled hour-glass figure, bleach-blonde locks, and red, red lips are erased; 'Marilyn's' voice is reconstructed by a computer, as is her looping script (reproduced from her published diaries). No longer masked by her iconic image, Monroe's words are, via this video, allowed into an offshoot species of cinema, if not on to an old silver screen. As in Parreno's *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World* (2000), a previously silenced individual is offered space to speak.

In *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World*, a manga character (to which Parreno and Pierre Huyghe purchased the right as part of a wider collaborative project) comes forth from the dark blue nowhere of an electronic screen to tell her tale. She is one of many unimportant figures created as a kind of extra for animations and comics. Made cheaply, sold cheaply, she is not meant to survive any story in which she is placed. She is recyclable like Marilyn, yet not at all iconic. Parreno and Huyghe call her AnnLee but this matters little – she might be anyone, any girl.

Fascination with celebrity dissolves in Parreno's current, widely acclaimed installation for the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern in London, *Anywhen*. Or at least, fascination with human celebrity dissolves: the artist's focus is now on the Turbine Hall itself as a sort of art-world star.

Since the turn of the millennium, artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Bruce Nauman and Ai Weiwei have created monumental installations for the Turbine Hall – a space 155 metres long, and at points 35 metres high. Only Parreno, however, in creating something for this distinctive and difficult space consulted its architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. This keen attentiveness inevitably seeps into *Anywhen* – even in its immensity, each corner, each component of the Turbine Hall is animated. Parreno describes *Anywhen* as an automaton, and indeed the space appears almost to breathe. At the core of the hall is a changing arrangement of ten screens, which ascend and descend as though exhaling, inhaling.

Whichever way the visitor enters the world of *Anywhen*, via the new Switch House or from a meander along the South Bank, she encounters one of Parreno's signature marquees, suspended from the highest of the modulated ceilings in the Turbine Hall. In a series of works, Parreno has reimagined the classic, brightly lit marquees found outside old theatres and cinemas, which coruscated against the cold of the night as audiences queued underneath. Some match this nostalgic picture better than others; some are recognisable rectangles, with neat lines of spherical lights, reminiscent of starlets' dressing-room mirrors. The marquee hanging in the Turbine Hall has mutated into an irregular hexagon, bulbs scattered about in a sporadic anti-pattern – a signal, perhaps, of the artist's shifting preoccupation with the iconic.

'Anywhen' feels its way around its environment, trying things out through repetition and relation, experience and experimentation

TATE PHOTOGRAPHY (c)

Screen tests: *Anywhen* in the Turbine Hall at London's Tate Modern

Sights and sounds in the installation are constantly shifting, claim Parreno and the curators, according to the rising and the setting of the sun and the vagaries of the weather outside Tate Modern. Certainly, when I visited on several occasions in the autumn, some elements evoked circadian rhythms: the exhibition includes the deceptively simple *Another Day in Another Sun* (2014, in collaboration with Liam Gillick), which comprises a single spotlight tracing a straight line – backwards, forwards; at the same time there is a sense in which it is orbiting the space, as if in a universe of alternative geometries, alternative orders.

The Turbine Hall is not our familiar cinema auditorium, and moving image artists who have created installations there (Tacita Dean, and now Parreno) have not striven to make it into a surrogate black box. Light pours in through the windows at one end of the hall – it would be difficult to convert it into a black box (just as it would be difficult to convert it into its opposite: the white cube). In *FILM*, her 2012 installation, Dean understood this: rather than blocking out the outside altogether, as in the cocoon of a cinema auditorium, the artist embraced the Turbine Hall's five tall, thin windows: 35mm projections flickered on to each, as light trickled through – making celluloid-stained glass.

At certain moments in *Anywhen*'s cycle, the ten screens at the centre tessellate, forming a viewing room for moving images: the images are projected on to a central screen, while rows of three vertical screens rest either side, and three horizontal screens hover above the visitors' heads. Somewhere between white cube and black box, the screens are grey. And, unlike the white cube and the black box, these screens are not working to cut off the spectator from her surroundings, to enclose her – it is, instead, an open network. Nothing obstructs the sky blue, sky grey coming through those huge windows; these hues are ever visible, just beyond the central screen.

Seen in isolation, the moving images in *Anywhen* are its least interesting element. Taken in the context of the whole installation, and of Parreno's wider *œuvre*, however, their motifs resonate more profoundly. For example, watching an onscreen performance by a ventriloquist (played by Nina Conti) may once more bring to mind *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World* and *Marilyn*: each of the three works explores how, with and without their bodies, female beings (or feminised objects, in the case of AnnLee) can approach speech. Speech is a masculine domain.

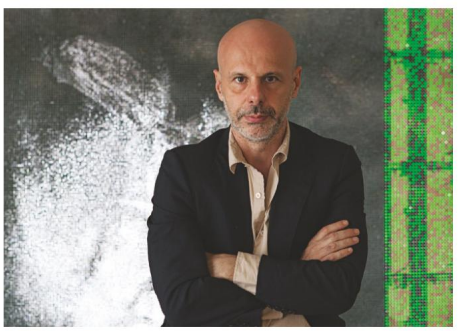
In *Anywhen*, the ventriloquist stands as a vessel for an experimental language Parreno has lifted from James Joyce then mixed with his own poetry. Not altogether graspable in meaning, this stream of thought is akin to a stream of liquid running through our fingers. And the aberrant surrounds of the Turbine Hall enhance this effect – in these acoustics, the audio itself is often lost (which is why Christian Marclay refused to exhibit his 2010 installation *The Clock* here).

A haze of fragments remains: "Mask, masquerade... communication, information... eternity, perpetuity..." The spectator is left, if she chooses, to free-associate: to my ears, when I visited, there were hints of the feminine, of the technological, of the temporal. But in an undetermined installation, this might mutate with other words, at other times.

Purple haze: *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006)

"This is me now," states the ventriloquist: "This is me 100 frames later." In a matter of seconds, the nature of the installation can shift. Later, we see moving images of a sapphire-coloured cephalopod: a sea creature with tentacles and curious eyes. As it floats centre-screen, amid inky-black waters, its brilliant blue scales have a phosphorescence all its own. In close-ups, markings interlaced with this ultramarine are illuminated: turquoises with flecks of copper orange, sparkling streaks of emerald green. In the Turbine Hall's monochrome landscape, such sudden spectrums of colour are hypnotic. Yet visitors are invited to watch, or not watch – to gaze in awe, or to drift in and out in intermittent distraction, or to utilise *Anywhen* as an artsy, ambient backdrop for social encounters, social media posts.

For me, the tentacular nature of the cephalopod was the most enticing aspect. It seemed to be linked to the installation as an evolving organism, an ever-changing whole. Writing for a recent issue of the journal *e-flux*, Donna Haraway (author of 'A Cyborg Manifesto', 1985) explored ideas of "tentacular thinking" as feeling, experimenting – 'tentacle' coming from the Latin words for 'feeler' and, before that, 'to feel' and 'to try'. Tentacularly, then, *Anywhen* feels its way around its environment, trying things out through repetition and relation, experience and experimentation. (Not unlike, incidentally, the alien interactions gracing our screens in the recent sci-fi film *Arrival*.)



Philippe Parreno

After a somewhat self-referential sequence in which the ventriloquist is seated under another glowing marquee within the moving image, the projection fades from sight, and the ten screens ascend into the heights of the Turbine Hall. As though they are a constellation of unfathomable stars, we look upwards, necks craned, as the screens do a dance of connection, disconnection, reconnection. There is a childlike wonder about it.

As I watch, something in the slight awkwardness of the exposed wires reminds me of the clumsy yet celestial opening of Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000). Moreover, I find that I want to conjure a collective noun for this harmonious cluster of screens: a technological grid, or (in keeping with the aqueous moving images) a shoal, a school.

In the closing speculations of *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze foresees a future cinema that "loses its privileged directions... in favour of an omni-directional space" which is in constant variation. Parreno is an ambitious artist, and *Anywhen* feels like this future cinema. In its network of moving screens, of shadows and lights, the 'privileged' presence of the moving image is dismantled. And an absence of overarching narrative promises omni-directional temporalities, in addition to an omni-directional space.

In one sequence of *Anywhen*, the triptych of horizontal screens that hovers above visitors descends in a gradual, purposeful motion. The sounds of a storm start to overwhelm the Turbine Hall; the incoming screens are almost daunting. Then they come to a standstill. The simulated storm subsides. And visitors instinctively lie back on the soft, silvery floor, bodies aligned with the three screens. Though the hall is still filled with the sounds of rain, it is quietened, comforting: like experiencing English drizzle inside one's home.

If anyone can compose a lullaby in the stark expanse of the Turbine Hall, it is Philippe Parreno – in an otherwise unknowable installation, this much I know.

***Anywhen* is on display in the Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, until 2 April**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA ROSSETTI

WARP FACTOR

They say a good film score is one you don't notice, but Mica Levi's score for Pablo Larraín's *Jackie* doesn't give you that option

By Sam Davies

"I suppose you want to hear about the bullet – about the sound when it collided with my husband's skull?" demands Jackie Kennedy of the newspaperman across the table. Natalie Portman, as the brittle but immaculately presented Kennedy, is suffering an interview, equal parts confrontational and confessional, with Billy Crudup's rumpled, wary hack, for the benefit of a profile of her husband – assassinated, we learn in flashbacks framed by the interview, just days before. It's a reminder that Lee Harvey Oswald's bullet that day was one of history's shots heard round the world, but also a moment that catches in the ear: because 'collided' sounds wrong, blunt, imprecise, as if the impact was accidental; and also because Pablo Larraín's film is so built around its score, composed by 28-year-old South Londoner Mica Levi, that other sounds are almost forgotten about.

Jackie opens with a dramatic arc in musical form leaping out of the black screen: a cluster of strings smearing downwards from high to low in a deliberate, precise glissando. Silence separates out more of these slow-motion orchestral screams, from low to high, high to low again. In a glissando the music, rather than leaping cleanly from note to note in a scale, slides between them, taking in every degree of chromatic difference along the way. In *Jackie*, the theme these opening glissandos create recurs through the film, each time evoking a world gone wrong, as if the weight of disaster and trauma are warping the musical fabric of the score, dragging it downwards. They're the sound of a moment when time slows, stretches unbearably and all but stops.

Levi does deploy more conventional modes too: there are softer pools of chamber music, with fragile woodwind figures floated over the top, and later a single snare, its muffled report marking out the bleak steps of a funeral march. But it's listening to the chords which Levi warps, curves and melts that remains with the viewer. For me they dislodged an odd memory from 1997, when Radio 1, at a loss for music to broadcast in the hours immediately after Princess Diana's death, played 'The Last Stand' by The Aloof on what felt like a loop for hours on end. The instrumental came from the chill-out rooms of club culture, but its stab at the epic gives it an atmosphere of bland, non-specific gravitas. Slow, sombre and orderly, it's music that doesn't sound out of place amid the pillars and plinths of the mausoleum or tomb. Perhaps these easy connotations, perhaps even a memory of the same broadcast, were at work in Levi's subconscious, as something all too obvious which her swooping pitch-bends could subvert and slide around.

Glissando is hardly Levi's invention. And the more you look the more you can find it in the music that was around in 1963, when *Jackie* is set: in the raucous, rollercoaster charts of big-band jazz, the lush, pillowy orchestrations for crooners like Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett, the cotton-candy cues of classic Disney, and even the slide guitar of the Delta blues as it fed into R&B and rock 'n' roll. Of them all, Levi's use of the technique has most in common with the palm-sweats and goosebumps of Bernard Herrmann's film work. Yet the way she frames each chromatic slide is unmistakably her own, with a few heartbeats of silence before and after each one, rather than blending them all into a continuous current, contributing to the sense that they are stark, almost alien interventions.

Part of this alien atmosphere could be a projection by any viewer familiar with Levi's

Alien interventionist: Mica Levi

Natalie Portman in *Jackie*

Levi's film breakthrough, *Under the Skin* (2013)

REX FEATURES (2)

previous soundtracking commission, for Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin* (2013), in which Scarlett Johansson's extraterrestrial visitor puts on human skin like a new outfit and roams remote areas of Scotland to feed on lonely men. Levi's arrangements for a chamber ensemble pushed at the limits of standard instrumentation, droning, scrabbling and scratching by turns, to create dauntingly insectile atmospheres. Levi was brought in by Larraín on the strength of her score for *Under the Skin*, and she wrote this one blind before *Jackie* was shot. With a script but no rough cuts to consult, her writing required a kind of imaginative inhabitation, a reading and interpretation of Jackie Kennedy's character that is arguably a form of acting itself. Rather than use it as background, Larraín has Levi's score daringly high in the mix, putting it on a par with the cast, as if each line of music is also a line of dialogue. At times it scythes through dialogue-free spaces; a wordless shriek as Greek chorus. Larraín has described how he compiled rough edits using Levi's score, an order of work which recalls animation, where voice performances are recorded and then animated around.

Music hasn't previously felt so central to a Larraín film. He's often relied on a judicious, if off-the-shelf, approach to the classical library, mining Brahms, Shostakovich, Sibelius, as well as maddening advertising jingles in *No* (2012), which dramatised the 1988 national plebiscite that ended dictatorship in Chile. *The Club* (2015), about disgraced priests and nuns exiled to a small seaside town, used Bach, Britten but also Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* for string quartet – the transfixing intensity of which feels now like a glance forwards to Levi's equally arresting chords.

As well as Levi's score, Larraín does use diegetic music, but only very sparingly. In one flashback we catch the final fading notes of a famous White House concert of 1961, in which the 75-year-old cello virtuoso Pablo Casals played his half-paced,

Larraín has Levi's score daringly high in the mix, on a par with the cast, as if each line of music is also a line of dialogue

elegiac version of a Catalan folk melody, 'El cant dels ocells' ('The song of the birds'); eyewitnesses report that Casals was heard weeping as he played. In the other example, Portman slides the cast recording of Lerner and Loewe's *Camelot* on to the turntable – one of Jack's favourites, she later explains – and wanders in a daze from stateroom to stateroom. A bereft wife clutching a tumbler of vodka in one hand and a cigarette in the other; period music, show-home perfect set-dressing and wardrobe. As if a switch has been accidentally flicked, *Jackie* becomes more prestige TV show than cinema: a *Mad Men* spin-off. And yet the only essential difference is the music. It's a moment in which Levi's strange strings are absent, and which shows how transformative her music is for the rest of Larraín's film.

***Jackie* is released in UK cinemas on 20 January and is reviewed on page 68**

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PRIMAL SCREEN
THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA

Stage and film comedies have distorted our view of the early days of cinema – but some of them are terrific

By Bryony Dixon

As I write, another stage play about the early film biz has just opened. Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman's *Once in a Lifetime*, at the Young Vic in London, is a classic Broadway farce, written in 1930, about actors and actresses surviving (or not) the coming of sound to the movies. It helped spawn the myth of early Hollywood, which we know best from *Singin' in the Rain* (1951) and *The Artist* (2011). Earnest articles have not dislodged the idea that actors with hilariously squeaky voices or accents inconsistent with their refined looks had their contracts ripped up. As they say, why let the truth get in the way of a good story?

It raises the question of how much our mental image of early filmmaking is formed by later drama. There is no doubt that for anyone interested in the genesis of the film business, a good fictional narrative on the subject is a welcome relief from the dryness of the surviving source material, the patent books and statistics, trade press and court records. No all-encompassing memoir of the early film world has survived in this country or America, no great narrative novel, such as a Zola might have written about the pioneer filmmakers in France, exists to bring to life the granular detail for us; but every decade or so a film or TV drama makes the attempt.

Two of my favourites are things I saw when I was young – Peter Bogdanovich's *Nickelodeon* (1976) and ATV's six-part series *Flickers* (1980), a rare drama about the early British film trade. Both are set in the halcyon days of the film boom, when the medium was transformed from touring attraction to commercial industry and settled in a home of its own, the cinema – between 1906 and 1915, more or less. Both are broadly comic treatments and can't resist the potential for gags in the primitive origins of a business that is now so astonishingly complex – the wobbly sets, the hand-to-mouth production methods, overly gestural acting, extreme make-up and splendid disregard for health and safety.

***Nickelodeon* has a mixed reputation, often dismissed by critics for its lack of pace and its knowingness. Roger Ebert has it about right: "Bogdanovich's escaping hot-air balloons, elaborately staged pratfalls and period sets aren't exploited; they're just there." Nevertheless, it is still very funny in parts and a guilty pleasure for silent-film buffs, who enjoy spotting the references – sight-gags from Keaton comedies and stories recounted by Allan Dwan about early Hollywood. It gives you a feel for how things worked – how the pre-auteur director was just some schmuck with a megaphone, reliant on the know-how of a genius cameraman, how the crooks at**

'Nickelodeon' is often dismissed by critics, but it gives you a feel for the early film business

Bob Hoskins and Sherrie Hewson in *Flickers*

the top of the business (in this case Edison's Patents Company, a sort of cinematic mafia) tried to stamp out the smaller companies. The film illustrates the rise of the star system, and how the transition from the theatrical to the cinematic style affects the performers. The camera is cruel to the aged, and experienced actors are dumped in favour of perfect skin tone.

***Flickers* shares many of these themes, but Britain's film industry provides a dowdier environment. Arnie Cole, a touring Bioscope showman, superbly played by Bob Hoskins, has no patents company thugs to deal with, but he needs to get out from under the middlemen. As he explains to a potential investor, the posh but unconventional Maud (Frances de la Tour), "I've only got the fag end of the wrong end of the business... I 'ave to show other people's films that I 'ave to rent from a middle man. Why should I keep that lot? I want to make me own films and let that lot work for me." As Dick Fiddy, BFI archive TV expert, observes, "it's ironic that a series about early filmmaking should be shot on video." But the series' modest production values don't undermine the wealth of detail about life on the road for the touring show, the low wages and midnight flits, the 'bicycling' of prints to other cinemas to extract maximum value out of the hired films, the pop-up shop-cinemas and nitrate fires. It's a joy to watch. Clearly, the writer, Roy Clarke (*Keeping up Appearances* and *Last of the Summer Wine*), is as obsessed with the early film business as Bogdanovich. It's pretty accurate – in effect, it is chapter one of Rachael Low's *History of the British Film (1906-1914)* with flesh on its bones – and Clarke creates real warmth between his characters; by the end of episode one, the viewer is completely in love with Arnie and Maud.**

Both dramas end at the moment of transition: the day of the nickelodeon or touring bioscope is over, and the big pictures and picture palaces have arrived. The moment is captured in *Nickelodeon* at the grand premiere in 1915 of D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, heralding the rise of the visionary director. It is left for Brian Keith's usually shouty producer to supply a philosophical note: "Think of it – all those people going to see the pictures. Why, a lot of 'em can't even talk American. But then they don't have to, because pictures are a language that everybody understands. It's like music for the eyes." Lovely. Now back to those stats.

MELTING POT

The films of Rita Azevedo Gomes, filled with layers, paradoxes and poetry, reinforce a conception of cinema built on friendship

By Cristina Álvarez López and Adrian Martin

Stefan Zweig's tale 'The Invisible Collection' begins with its narrator seated in a train compartment. Another man enters and introduces himself as a famous art dealer who has just endured "one of the strangest of his experiences". At this point the storytelling torch is passed to this second character: "I will let him tell the story in his own words, without using quote-marks – to avoid the complication of wheels within wheels."

The Portuguese filmmaker Rita Azevedo Gomes, however, cultivates and enjoys such wheels. Although her own 48-minute adaptation *The Invisible Collection* (2009) omits the man on the train, it employs other devices to frame, interrupt or expand the central story of the dealer's encounter with an elderly blind man who does not realise that his precious art collection has been quietly sold off by his family, right under his nose. These devices include the hallucinatory image of a woman associated with the incantatory phrase "eyes of a blue dog", who seemingly haunts the narrator – a detail adapted from an entirely different tale, one by Gabriel García Márquez. And, as in every Azevedo Gomes film, there is the added presence of poetry – passages that, she says, "open the story" and retell it in a different way, from another angle: "It is as if there were two movies, two layers, or one thing on top of the other."

Since 1990, Azevedo Gomes – born 1952 – has made 12 works in various formats and lengths. She is only now starting to become better known outside her homeland, on the international festival circuit – especially since the remarkable costume-melodrama *A Woman's Revenge* (2012).

The idea of multiple layers visible to the spectator is central to Azevedo Gomes's oeuvre. In 2005, she had the opportunity to film *The 15th Stone*, a two-hour conversation between Portugal's undisputed master filmmaker, Manoel de Oliveira (1908-2015), and a legendary and charismatic cinephile, João Bénard da Costa (1935-2009), then director of the Cinemateca Portuguesa. Oliveira expresses there his theory of representation, which he sees as a basic human drive that passes through successive stages – as Azevedo Gomes summarises it, "From representation, first comes the oratory, to tell the story. Then comes the representation of the story with actors representing roles, instead of being just one orator. After, we find the theatre and, later, cinema. I think that for him, one thing is always after the other."

Her own style as a filmmaker is quite distinct from Oliveira's, but this sense of 'one thing after the other' is also part of her approach. Azevedo Gomes has a rich stock of classical culture, indexed in her films: painting, architecture, music, literature. (Not that pop culture is entirely missing, as the presence of Janis Joplin or Françoise Hardy on her soundtracks attests.) She doesn't so much blend these diverse arts as contemplate their interaction, in layers. It comes as little surprise, then, that she explores a particular range of visual effects – superimposition, blurred focus, smoke and fog (especially in *Fragile Like the World*, 2000), slow alteration of lighting to change our perception of an object or surface – orchestrated in relation to a constant fading and overlapping of sounds. Everything in her films seems to be involved in a slow melting, a metamorphosis.

Rita Azevedo Gomes: everything in her films seems to be involved in a slow melting, a metamorphosis

Altar (2003) is her most radical and inventive exploration of this layered approach. At its core stands the small physical gesture of a woman, Madeleine (Patrícia Saramago), a gesture that obsesses a widowed playwright (René Gouzene) living on an island. (Saramago is also the film's editor: Azevedo Gomes likes to cast friends and crew members amid the professional actors.) The entire film is constructed as a slow-paced unfolding of the events and implications surrounding this single gesture. The oral retelling of memories, filled with rich literary description, is counterpointed by a careful soundtrack mixing natural sounds, musical pieces, and passages of poetry by E.E. Cummings and Sophia de Mello (read by the director herself). The image-track mixes domestic scenes, in which the protagonist tells the story to a young visitor, with a selection of details from paintings. *Altar* is a stunningly beautiful piece, very much in line with an idea that Oliveira and Bénard da Costa discuss in *The 15th Stone*: that the power of an image comes not from what it shows but what it signifies, a meaning which is not strictly visible, and can be found only by going right 'inside' the work.

Altar also plays with two tropes beloved of Azevedo Gomes. The first is the paradoxical parallelism between different sensory, aesthetic experiences, such as sight and hearing ("images so silent that, when seeing them, it seems like I've closed my eyes", as one of de Mello's poems says). In Azevedo Gomes's debut, *The Sound of the Shaking Earth* (1990), Alberto (José Mário Branco) quotes Leonardo da Vinci: "Painting is mute poetry and poetry is blind painting."

The second trope is the intermingling of distinct 'worlds', defined both in historical time and geographic place. Sometimes this occurs through literal superimposition, as in the movements that occur simultaneously in two different directions and in two different realms (real landscape and painted landscape, for instance). In *The Sound of the Shaking Earth*, this disorientation, this collapse of our conventional sense of movement, functions a little like the 'zolly' shots (zooming in and tracking out) made famous by Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958).

This idea of intermingled worlds is taken further, plot-wise, once Alberto in *The Sound of the Shaking Earth* moves from his house to a hotel

room, cutting all ties with his everyday life and devoting himself exclusively to dreaming about the novel he is writing. In a final *mise en abyme*, he seems to be swallowed by his own fiction to the point of becoming just another of his characters.

In *Fragile Like the World*, it is again a change of scenery that opens up a whole new dimension: the secret love affair of two teenagers enters a magical, mythical realm previously only hinted at, once the protagonists escape, in the second part of the film, to the woods. There, surrounded by nature, isolated from civilisation, their love reaches an other-worldly status, achieving an aura of the absolute and the eternal.

Experimentation with the dialectic between fixity and movement is another core element of Azevedo Gomes's cinema. At a basic level we notice how, in several of her films, there is a tendency toward a *mise en scène* that unfolds continuous action in static, long takes. But whenever this is altered with a cut or an exuberant camera movement (such as the ostentatious pan shot in *The Invisible Collection*, or the close-ups that puncture *A Woman's Revenge*), the entire film trembles. The power of her work rests upon this economy of sobriety: a change of angle, perspective or motion implies a genuine transformation that always opens up the scene, taking it in new dramatic, atmospheric or formal directions.

The Conquest of Faro (2005) is a commissioned work which in many respects prefigures *A Woman's Revenge*. Two couples meet in a restaurant, and one of the men starts telling the story of the conquest of this Portuguese city. In a superb extended take, we see one of the women falling asleep and, as if slipping back in history, waking up inside a tableau where the same four players enact (with added nuances) the story told. The palace where sentimental intrigues decide the destiny of the city and the restaurant where centuries later history is invoked have exactly the same decor. Even if slightly altered, traces remain (same archway, same amphora), taking possession of the present-day characters.

A Woman's Revenge exemplifies another side of the dialectic of fixity and movement. Like many of Azevedo Gomes's central characters, the female protagonist, a duchess (Rita Durão), is driven by an obsession that is bigger than her life. This all-consuming obsessiveness (which she shares with, most notably, the teenage heroine of *Fragile Like the World*) undoubtedly fascinates the director. But she is equally interested in the transformation that the story operates upon the gentleman (Fernando Rodrigues) who listens to it.

Readers of Zweig, as well as cinephiles enamoured of Max Ophuls's classic adaptation of his *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948), will recognise this powerful narrative technique: the time it takes for someone to 'process' a story narrated especially to them is also the event that transforms them forever, perhaps tragically so. This is an essential aspect of Azevedo Gomes's films, their secret, shared theme: to dramatise or recreate the inner and intersubjective journeys afforded by those vital, aesthetic experiences which move and change us, whether in storytelling, painting, music or cinema.

Her latest film, *Correspondences* (2016), is

A sense of unbelonging: *Correspondences* (2016)

inspired by the letters exchanged between two leading Portuguese poets, Sophia de Mello and Jorge de Sena, during the latter's 20-year exile. Rather than recreating their friendship in conventional manner, Azevedo Gomes weaves together textures, colours, landscapes and voices accompanying the poets' words (their letters, but also fragments of poems, essays and public recordings). This is the testimony of an exile that is not only geographical; there is a sense of unbelonging not just to a country but to the world itself, and of an open wound that cannot be healed due to the persistent memories of joyous encounters severed by distance.

Correspondences is a free-form portrait of two strong personalities, and of a friendship sealed by a shared artistic stance against a repressive political climate. But it is also an investigation of how their words reach, affect and join other people's lives. The texts are handled in inventive ways, through multiple voices and dramatisations, ranging from uncertain first readings to fully rendered recitals. The space of the fiction is frequently punctured by raw, behind-the-scenes elements. The act of filmmaking itself thus occurs in a place where old collaborators and new friends (such as the filmmaker Pierre Léon or the critic Boris Nelepo) gather to work together.

The power of an image comes not from what it shows but what it signifies, a meaning which is not strictly visible

In this way, *Correspondences* demonstrates, more than any of her previous works, the fundamentally artisanal quality of Azevedo Gomes's *oeuvre*. It reinforces a conception of cinema built on friendship and devotion. And it is a tribute to those things (poems, films, songs, stories...) that others, before and after, have loved, and will come to love.

Fernando Rodrigues and Rita Durão in *A Woman's Revenge* (2012)

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Bad news: Rebecca Hall in Antonio Campos's dramatisation of the true story of Florida reporter Christine Chubbuck, who committed suicide on air in 1974

Christine

USA/United Kingdom 2016
Director: Antonio Campos
Certificate 15 119m 35s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

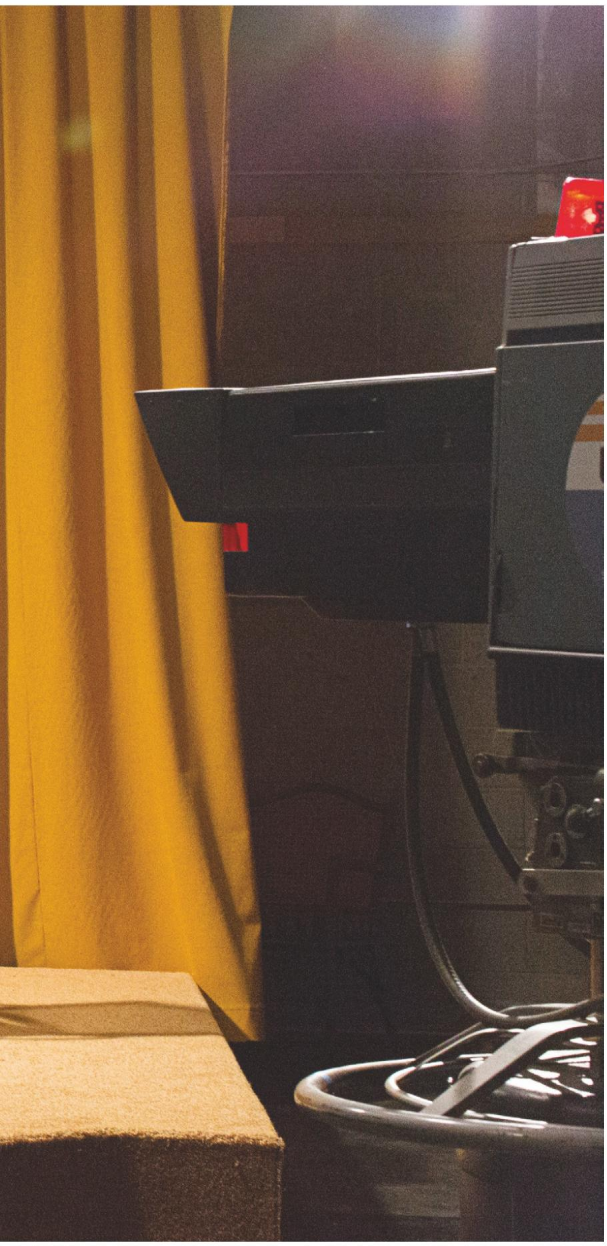
It may be a cynical view, but if footage survived of the horrifying moment in 1974 when Florida TV news reporter Christine Chubbuck committed suicide live on air, would we really have had two feature films in the past year about this disturbing if somewhat forgotten event? The nether regions of the web now offer up all sorts of distressing true-life clips, but the videotaped images of Chubbuck's death have never surfaced – doubtless much to the relief of her family and friends – even though a single oxidised copy is believed to still exist.

In the event, it's not giving too much away to reveal that Antonio Campos's *Christine* re-enacts that fateful day, with Rebecca Hall pulling the trigger in the title role. It's a moment of awful spectacle in what is an otherwise low-key, thoroughly researched dramatisation, one that doesn't always stick precisely to the known facts but aims to be a sympathetic portrayal of a very troubled individual.

Whether Chubbuck's life story, shaped by long-term mental health issues and marked by the sexism and changing content demands of her chosen industry, would be deemed quite so worthy of extensive coverage without its shocking final act is a moot point, even if it's worth noting that Chubbuck herself specifically asked technicians to tape the programme on the day. Whether it also follows that she envisaged the footage then being widely distributed – rendering *Christine*'s climactic reconstruction a belated fulfilment of an otherwise frustrated wish – is most likely an assumption too far.

As such, the question of whether Campos and writer Craig Shilowich are exploiting Chubbuck's very particular set of circumstances, even unwittingly, won't go away. Their dramatisation, however, roots for her throughout, presenting a far from likeable yet undeniably passionate woman who deserves to be remembered for more than that one terminal moment. Hall's hugely invested and truly mesmerising central performance is key here, showing us how Christine's frequently abrasive workplace manner comes from an uncompromising dedication to intelligent news-gathering, countering the station manager's demands for sensationalism to massage their flagging viewing figures. At the same time, her personal life seems a wasteland: single but with an ongoing crush on smoothie anchorman 'Gorgeous George'; still a virgin and troubled by a painful ovarian condition likely to limit her future fertility; and somewhat fractiously living at home with her mum, whose love life is rather more active than her own. Hall vividly shows the pain of

Michael C. Hall as anchorman George Peter Ryan



someone buried in a situation they're desperate to escape, yet whose mounting anxiety materialises in a gnawing social ineptitude that makes everything so much worse, curdling any likelihood of romance and polluting her opportunities for career advancement.

Actually, all three of director Campos's features essentially focus on social misfits, from the disaffected teenage boarder at an upscale establishment in his debut *Afterschool* (2008) and the sexually aberrant twentysomething American in Paris in *Simon Killer* (2012) to the flailing, self-involved reporter seen here. *Christine* is, though, formally somewhat removed from its predecessors, whose astringent long-held shots and deliberately unsettling denial of specific narrative information arguably limited their commercial appeal. This time, the storytelling is much more straightforward and accessible, laying out a believable moment in time, with America mired in the Watergate debacle, and rising social paranoia in the air.

The script sketches an intriguing milieu in small-town TV in the combined presence of hard-pressed station manager Mike (*Killer Joe* playwright Tracy Letts in muscular form), anchorman George (a superb Michael C. Hall), whose suave demeanour masks just about suppressed insecurities, and resiliently upbeat cameraperson Jean (Maria Dizzia, another revelation), whose antidote to the blues is a bowl of ice cream and a singalong to the theme from *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. Together, they encode a microcosm of capitalist America, where everyone's out to display some unique selling point that gives them an advantage over others, while at the same time bedevilled by anxieties they try to hide from public view. They all have problems, but Chubbuck is the only one who allows herself to be destroyed by hers.

Rebecca Hall's sheer craft creates understanding for Chubbuck's challenging plight, even if it can't quite obscure the film's underlying conundrums

It's a pity Shilowich's dialogue at times reaches for the way too obvious – "You know what your problem is, Chubbuck? You're a feminist!" – or, as in the unlikely 'transactional therapy' session that Christine is inveigled into attending by fresh convert George, serves up a swathe of what feels like convenient exposition. Sundry clunky turns of phrase notwithstanding, the drama allows Chubbuck to emerge as a complex young woman who, with better mental health provision, might have succeeded in achieving her goals in a more enlightened era. Still, a lingering question remains: does this assemblage of character traits and circumstance really 'explain' Chubbuck? Is the film suggesting that X plus Y plus Q creates a chain reaction leading to suicide? Can a person's life, not least one as distinctively moulded as this one, ever be reduced to such a representational process?

One imagines different viewers might have different responses to this question, though anyone coming to the film after seeing that other recent Chubbuck-themed offering, Robert Greene's *Kate Plays Christine*, may find themselves especially sceptical about Campos's approach. Greene's take on the same events is an observational doc following actress Kate Lyn Sheil as she prepares to shoot a movie biopic about Chubbuck, struggling en route to access the extreme state of mind that might do her subject justice. From what we see of the evidently fake, improv-led flick Greene conjures up for the occasion, its purpose seems not to be a viable drama in itself but to goad Sheil into questioning the whole undertaking. It leads to a startling, unexpected finale, in which Sheil's personal, highly charged interpretation of the suicide scene puts the motives behind the whole project in a fierce spotlight, addressing whether filming this story at all is exploiting Chubbuck's tragedy in the service of a saleable movie.

Kate Plays Christine effectively underlines the limits of any performance through which an actor attempts to enter another person's soul. Still, if we never quite believe Sheil as Christine, a rare TV archive clip of Chubbuck herself in studio interview mode serves to underline what a remarkable job of embodiment Rebecca Hall has done in *Christine*. Her sheer craft creates understanding for Chubbuck's challenging plight, even if it can't quite obscure the film's underlying conundrums. Is it really tenable, after all, to present a protagonist who rails against exploitative TV news, and then end the film with her meticulously recreated on-air bullet to the head? Or is it even more demeaning to Chubbuck to suggest that the dramatic construct of a screenplay can have us assuming we know her inside and out?

Then again, it's still possible to give Campos the benefit of the doubt, since his film seemingly leaves these very questions to hang there, in a way that can only be productive of further debate and conversation. You'll certainly also want to catch *Kate Plays Christine* as a provocative counterblast. Yet while *Christine* leaves us at times engrossed, at times decidedly uneasy, the outcome, surely, is a positive engagement with issues that remain ever relevant, spanning the status of women in the workplace, the insidious prevalence of depression and the social responsibility involved in framing TV news.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Melody C. Roscher
Craig Shilowich
Written by
Craig Shilowich
Director of Photography
Joe Anderson
Editor
Sofia Subercaseaux
Production Designer
Scott Kuzio

Original Music
Danny Bensi
Saunder Jurriaans
Sound Designer
Coll Anderson
Costume Designer
Emma Potter

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Production Companies
Great Point Media
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Executive Producers
Robert Halmi Jr
Jim Reeve
Sean Durkin
Josh Mond

Cast
Rebecca Hall
Christine Chubbuck
Michael C. Hall
George Peter Ryan
Tracy Letts
Michael
Maria Dizzia
Jean
J. Smith-Cameron
Peg
Tim Simons
Steve
Kim Shaw
Andrea
John Cullum
Bob Anderson
Morgan Spector
Doctor Parsons
Jayson Warner Smith
Mitch
Kimberley Drummond
Gail
Lindsay Ayliffe
Captain Frank Basil
Susan Pourfar
Miranda
Rachel Hendrix
Crystal

In Colour

Distributor
Curzon Artificial Eye

Sarasota, Florida, 1974. Christine Chubbuck is a news reporter for a local TV station. Her commitment to earnest features on local issues is at odds with manager Mike's drive to increase viewing figures by broadcasting more sensationalised stories. Christine's often exasperatingly self-involved behaviour adds to her feelings of isolation, which are rooted in her being still single – and a virgin – at 29 and living with her mother Peg. Moreover, an ovarian cyst causes her frequent pain and is likely to involve surgery that may inhibit her future fertility.

At work, cameraperson Jean is supportive, though Christine gives little back in return, while news anchor George – on whom Christine has an unspoken crush – is seemingly genuinely interested, taking her out to dinner and introducing her to a group therapy session that he believes will help her problems. The discovery that George has been offered a new job at the station owner's Baltimore operation comes as a blow to Christine's confidence, however, especially when she is passed over for promotion, and later has one of her stories bumped by a report on a serial killer, which Jean has put together in her spare time.

Christine then appears to be a changed woman, more amenable to Mike, but it's all a facade – given a slot on the 5pm programme, she announces that, in accordance with the station's sensationalist policy, she will attempt suicide on air. She shoots herself in the head and later dies in hospital, much to the shock and regret of her colleagues.

Mourning in America: Peter Sarsgaard as Bobby Kennedy, Natalie Portman as Jackie

Jackie

USA/United Kingdom/France/
British Virgin Islands 2016
Director: Pablo Larraín, Certificate 15 99m 31s

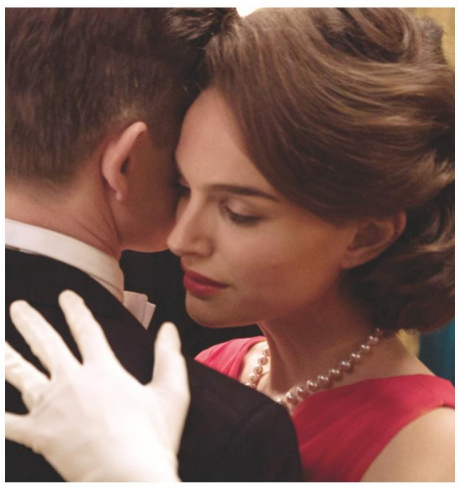
See Wide Angle, page 60

Reviewed by Violet Lucca

Arguably as influential as the president's speeches and policy initiatives, official White House photographer Pete Souza's pictures have served to shape the narrative of the Obama administration. Aside from providing memes for those on the right (that damn smug tyrant Obungler!) and left (Barack and wacky Uncle Joe Biden pranking president-elect Trump!), these images have been a constant reminder that a handsome and Harvard-educated African American is leader of the free world. The glamour and authoritative optimism in these photographs have more often than not seemed to exist in another world, one far removed from the multitudinous racial injustices that marked the country everyone else is living in. The photograph of Obama leaning down so that five-year-old Jacob Philadelphia could touch his hair and know that it felt like his own speaks most powerfully to this idealism and sense of transcendence: here, after 232 years, was a president who looked like him.

While that other plane on which the Obamas have existed doesn't have a particular name, the mythology surrounding them was not unlike the Camelot of the Kennedys. Every presidency – or at least every presidency post-Kennedy – has engaged in self-mythologising, but Souza's photographs have encapsulated the classical (eg, Michelle's sartorial choices) and the modern (eg, their blackness) elements of the Obamas, something the Kennedys also chased with their youthfulness, fashion-sense and $2 million restoration of the White House. (For a point of contrast, the Eisenhowers ate TV dinners watching separate television sets – soaps on hers, westerns on his; there was no attempt to charm the press with *their* personal lives.) For these reasons and more, Pablo Larraín's *Jackie*, released in the twilight of the Obama years, almost feels more directly about the past eight years than do the two films about the president as a young man (*Barry* and *Southside with You*). Unfortunately, Larraín's film is hollow. Burdened with a terrible, Black List script by Noah Oppenheim, *Jackie* offers few insights into one of the 20th century's most heavily analysed events, and says even less about grief.

The film is framed by the famous *Life* interview Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy did with Theodore H. White in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, a week after her husband was assassinated (though White is not identified by name). This device doesn't add much to the film, and Oppenheim immediately confuses resilience with hostility: Jackie (Natalie Portman) randomly snaps at the reporter over anything and everything, repeatedly reminding him that she'll be editing his story. (While grief can make you over-sensitive and short-tempered, it seems unlikely that a socialite



Natalie Portman

who is trying to control her husband's legacy would be so antagonistic towards a member of the press, let alone one who won a Pulitzer for a book titled *The Making of the President, 1960*.)

Bits and pieces of the dialogue are cribbed from interviews that Kennedy aide Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr taped with the young widow, but by putting portentous quotes about legacy and history into all his characters' mouths at random moments, Oppenheim makes these real lines sound fake. Robert Kennedy (Peter Sarsgaard, who seems to be paying a visit from a better movie) bemoans his inability to continue with Civil Rights, and complains that Lyndon B. Johnson gets to handle Vietnam ("It's all teed up for him!"); Nancy Tuckerman (Greta Gerwig), Jackie's secretary, confesses that once, two years ago, she felt envious about one of Jackie's gowns. Rather than increasing our interest or understanding, faithful lines like these transform real people back into bolded terms in a textbook. (John Hurt as Jackie's priest is largely free of this burdensome fidelity, but his scenes do go on a bit too long.)

And then there's that voice. Portman attempts to reproduce Jacqueline's distinctive, mannered vocal style, the product of her wealthy East Coast upbringing. However, the actress's approximation is roundly terrible, a mishmash of mid-Atlantic and Noo Yawk vowels, Marilyn Monroe singing 'Happy Birthday, Mr President' and the tiniest dash of a vocal fry thrown in. (Drew Barrymore did a better job with this unique accent in the HBO dramatisation of *Grey Gardens*.) Yet again, history has been turned into an extended, unfunny *Saturday Night Live* sketch for awards season. But even when you allow yourself to forget that this dopey imitation is going on before you, Portman fails to express anything deeper. She cries several times, very close to the camera, but doesn't radiate sadness; just as in *Black Swan* (2010), there's an emptiness that Portman cannot fill. In one of the film's most outlandish scenes – one that recapitulates every cliché about who this woman was – Jackie pours herself a big glass of vodka and totters around the White House in her different gowns, sobbing and listening to her record of *Camelot*. This is camp, not impenetrable sorrow. At another point, Larraín reproduces down to the angle a photograph of Johnson being sworn in on Air Force One. Jacqueline's expression is truly haunting, whereas, in the film, Jackie's is just kind of blank. If exquisite suffering is the only way a woman can make herself a Serious Actress, Portman is simply not up to the task.

Larraín, who has made a career out of excavating historical trauma and uncomfortable truths in his native Chile, at first seems ill-equipped to deal with another nation's pain. But *Jackie* barely feels like his film. Throughout, he deploys some of the finest techniques of international arthouse cinema to spice up the very talky, unsurprising narrative: fixed shots from the waist up, borrowed from Ozu; some scenes shot during magic hour; close handheld work during tense conversations that approximate documentary. (The scenes of the president's convertible speeding away from Dealey Plaza crackle with emotional intensity, not because 'somebody got shot' but because they display a cinematic bravura that doesn't seem to exist anywhere else in the film.) Unlike the scuzzy videotape of *No* (2012) or the hazy, bluish gloom hanging over *The Club* (2015), there is no unifying aesthetic that makes *Jackie* visually trenchant.

The narrative doesn't really cohere either: Oppenheim's script, like the *Life* interview, jumps around in time, but the scenes don't comment on each other, and seem jumbled together for a stab at profundity that comes across as fake. (One could argue that this is an attempt at approximating disordered thoughts following violent trauma, but that's giving everyone involved far too much credit.) Rather than communicating truths about Jacqueline's life or the times she lived in, *Jackie*'s superficiality reflects an age in which social media offers everyone an opportunity to share formerly private moments without actually being intimate.

And, in light of the 2016 presidential election, it would seem that a more telling film for our time would be one set *before* Kennedy's assassination. In the early 1960s, Dallas was a hotbed of conservative radicalism, and the city's leadership actively positioned it as the place to oppose the Roman Catholic, supposedly socialist-sympathising president. (Dallas was the regional headquarters of the racist, anti-communist John Birch Society; a month before Kennedy's assassination, UN ambassador Adlai Stevenson was physically attacked by a mob during a speech there.) A film that could come to terms with the fact that seething conspiracists are, psychologically speaking, no different from those who don't adhere to the *Loose Change* theory of history might do us all a world of good – or at least prepare us for whatever's coming next. (It takes surprisingly little for our minds to be led astray, and social media only reinforces our worst impulses.) A treacly, puritanically authentic recreation of an American political dynasty's sorrow says much less about history.

Jackie totters around the White House in her different gowns, sobbing and listening to her record of 'Camelot'. This is camp, not impenetrable sorrow

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Juan de Dios Larraín
Darren Aronofsky
Mickey Liddell
Scott Franklin
Ari Handel
Written by
Noah Oppenheim
Director of Photography
Stéphane Fontaine
Edited by
Sebastián Sepulveda
Production Designer
Jean Rabasse
Music Composed by
Mica Levi
Sound Design
David Miranda
Costume Designer
Madeline Fontaine

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Production Companies
Wild Bunch presents in association with LD Entertainment, Why Not Productions, Endemol Shine Studios, Bliss Media a Protozoa production A Pablo Larraín film
Executive Producers
Pete Shilaimon
Jennifer Monroe
Jayne Hong
Josh Stern
Wei Han
Qi Lin
Martine Cassinelli
Charlie Corwin
Howard Owens

Cast
Natalie Portman
Jackie Kennedy
Peter Sarsgaard
Bobby Kennedy
Greta Gerwig
Nancy Tuckerman
Richard E. Grant
Bill Walton
Caspar Phillipson
John Fitzgerald Kennedy
John Carroll Lynch
Lyndon B. Johnson
Beth Grant
Lady Bird Johnson
Max Casella
Jack Valenti
Billy Crudup
journalist
John Hurt
priest

In Colour [1.66:1]

Distributor
E1 Films

Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, 1963. Jacqueline Kennedy greets a reporter from a magazine at her country home.

In 1962, Jacqueline prepares to give a tour of the White House for a televised special; she rehearses lines with her assistant. Real footage from the special is intercut with the film.

Dallas, 22 November 1963. Jacqueline rehearses a speech that she is to give in Spanish, then boards the presidential motorcade at the airport.

In Hyannis Port, Jacqueline tells the reporter, in graphic detail, about the fatal shooting of her husband, then tells him that she won't allow him to print any of it. He asks her what the bullet sounded like. Jacqueline remembers the motorcade speeding away while her husband lay bleeding in her lap.

Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as president on Air Force One. Disoriented, Jacqueline asks about the shooting and begins funeral arrangements. She goes to the autopsy, then returns to the White House with her brother-in-law Robert Kennedy. She makes funeral arrangements with staffer Bill Walton, modelling the ceremony on Abraham Lincoln's procession. She tells her children of their father's death. A priest presides over mass at the White House. Robert, Jacqueline and assistants inspect Arlington National Cemetery. Jacqueline speaks with a priest about her marriage and the injustice of her husband's death. The family attends the funeral. Jacqueline moves out of the White House. Her husband's body is interred. Jacqueline sees mannequins dressed like her in a store window, and remembers a ball at the White House.

The Persian version: inside a women's juvenile rehabilitation centre in Iran

Starless Dreams

Iran 2016
Director: Mehrdad Oskouei

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

Clear-eyed, stubbornly compassionate, frequently harrowing, this documentary portrait of young women incarcerated in a juvenile rehabilitation centre in Iran presents an unusual perspective on female life in the Middle East. The subjects are neither demure, cowed objects of familial and social repression, nor romanticised rebels aglow with untapped potential – standard cinematic takes on Iranian womanhood. Instead, they are by conventional measures thoroughly bad lots: thieves, drug abusers, violent offenders. "I've stabbed people, but I've never shot anyone," notes one girl, who calls herself 651 after the number of grams of crystal meth she was arrested with. Another looks steadily at her interlocutor, director Mehrdad Oskouei, as she explains how she, her sister and her mother conspired to kill her father. And a further girl, giggly and soft-spoken, speaks without melodrama of her desire to end her life ("Why do you want to die so young?" "I'm tired").

As the young women's stories emerge – without a guiding voiceover, though they talk directly to Oskouei, and his offscreen voice is heard – a question forms in the mind: what if crime among young people such as these were treated as an understandable response to intolerable living conditions rather than a symptom of bad character? So grim are the home lives described by these young women that it's hardly surprising they should seek ways to numb themselves, support themselves, alter their circumstances or just externalise their rage. The glaring injustice of being born into a broken, abusive home is highlighted when 651 – an extraordinary screen presence, with mischief, charisma and intelligence to burn – upbraids Oskouei for sharing the information that he has a 16-year-old daughter of his own. "You shouldn't have told us," she tells him fiercely. "She is being raised with love and comfort, while we were raised with rot and filth."

A history of sexual abuse is almost a given in this community; so too are drug-addicted parents. Some small children, one girl notes, mistake brown opium for candy, though with her little brother it was the other way around – he confused candy with opium because the drug was so much more prominent than the treat in his home life. Mothers are regarded with adoration, resentment and guilt: two girls express their sorrow for having beaten up their mothers, while a third says of her mother, "She never showed me any kindness, but I loved her." If she had a daughter of her own? "I would kill her." Male relatives, meanwhile, are almost always bad news: drug users, molesters, pimps. The family unit is for the most part the site of horror, and prison is a distinctly preferable option. "Please don't give me back to my family," pleads one girl. "If you give me back to them, they are going to chain me up." If most prison-based films construct release as a happy ending, and the outside world as freedom, here being released carries at least as much fear as promise.

In the meantime, pregnancies abound, promising sacrifice and inconvenience but also hope. When one young woman's baby is brought in to visit her, the inmates seem collectively calmed and nourished by its presence – though one of them, after holding the child, simply walks away in tears. The mother's crime, she explains, was stealing to pay her husband's hospital bills, after he drunkenly punched a window and ended up in a two-month coma. "Damn mothers and fathers," says 651, as the girls, all veiled, incongruously practise hairdressing on blonde-haired dummy heads. "All they can do is make babies, but when it comes to raising them..."

The fellow-feeling possible within a community in which everyone has transgressed is evident. Somayeh, she of the murdered father, points out that the circumstances of her life were likely to lead to one crime or another. "I might be

here now for murder, but what if I wasn't? What if I'd put up with him, or run away? Then I'd be an addict... That's how I can understand them." If it seems inevitable that such volatile young women, kept in close proximity, should compete with, bully or turn on each other, Oskouei either doesn't witness that, or chooses not to show it. The relationships depicted aren't sentimental or intimate, but they're certainly supportive, and seemingly characterised by a deep understanding of one another's circumstances and crimes. Not that the justice system is necessarily held in contempt: one inmate declares that she once intended to be a lawyer or a cop, so that she could help other young girls in her situation.

These stories are hard to take, as are the frequent outbursts of childish tears. Here, as Somayeh puts it, "the pain drips from the walls." Yet Oskouei – the much-garlanded director of *The Last Days of Winter* (2011) and *It's Always Late for Freedom* (2007) – brings vigour and dynamism to his account of these women's lives, drawing out individual personalities and quirks of self-expression rather than wallowing in pity for his subjects or playing up their victimhood. Interviews feature rapid-fire exchanges so raw and revealing that they could be taking place in therapy sessions ("Do you think you're a good girl?" "I used to be..."; "What is it that your heart desires?" "Peace and quiet"; "How can you get those?" "It's impossible").

The notion that the filmmaker is aligned with the inmates and not their parents or keepers is affirmed by the absence of prison officers and parents from the onscreen narrative: the girls are sometimes shown being interviewed by officials, but without the latter's faces being shown. At one point, Oskouei shoots an interview while crouched and whispering at his subject's bedside in early-morning half-light, while her fellow inmates sleep. But if this might strike some as a little too collusive, there's also some invigorating subversion of the filmmaker/subject dynamic, as when 651 and her friend Hasrat try out Oskouei's interview technique on one another. They discuss, among other things, just what this older male outsider is doing in their midst: "Why is Uncle Mehrdad making this film about us?" "To show at university"; "I thought the film was for the government! I was worried"; "Don't make this political!"

Behind the mask: Oskouei's ability to make his subjects relax makes the film complex and riveting

It's the space Oskouei allows for such personality-filled moments and exchanges, and the relaxation he is evidently able to encourage in his young subjects, that makes his film so complex and riveting. Can these young women escape the cycle of poverty, abuse and resultant bad behaviour, when society has provided them with so little reason to be respectful of, or obedient to, authority figures? Can young women so dominated by fear and defiance have those elements knocked out of them – and if they do, what will remain?

Girlishness, meanwhile, emerges as an ironically resilient quality: victims of repeated violation and violence and hardened repeat offenders these women may be, but they still write diaries; still doodle hearts and flowers and bridal gowns; still sing along to cheesy pop tunes in which heartbreak is a mere trope rather than a lived reality. Even amid such misfortune and injustice, wit, creativity and cheekiness improbably thrive, making Oskouei's film as perversely life-affirming as it is profoundly saddening. Mohammad Hadadi's cinematography and Amir Adibparvar's editing are no less sophisticated, finding endless revealing moments and etching the subjects' faces – whether weeping, raging or laughing in delight – on to the viewer's memory for good.

What if crime were treated as an understandable response to intolerable living conditions rather than a symptom of bad character?

Cry freedom: here the prospect of being released carries at least as much fear as promise

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Mehrdad Oskouei
Written by
Mehrdad Oskouei
Cinematographer
Mohammad Hadadi
Editor
Amir Adibparvar
Music Composer
Afshin Azizi
Sound Designer
Hossein Mahdavi

Production Company
Oskouei Films
A film by Mehrdad Oskouei
Executive Producer
Vahid Hajiloui

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
DocHouse

Iranian theatrical title
Royahaye dame sobh

A documentary filmed at a rehabilitation facility for young female offenders near Tehran. New inmate Khatereh is fingerprinted, and tells the officials that her father is crack-addicted and her mother depressed and abusive. Another inmate, Ghazal, explains how she was married at 14 and a mother at 15, and became addicted to drugs after her husband forced her to sell them. Another girl lists her crimes – stealing cars and committing acts of violence in pursuit of drug money. Hasrat shows her doodles: romantic messages to her boyfriend. Ava, who is pregnant, is about to be released; she speaks of her regret at having been cruel and violent to her mother in the past. Her bunkmate, who calls herself 651, overhears this, and admits that she too beat her mother. Their friend Hasrat weeps on the telephone as her parents refuse to visit or bring her clothes to wear. Somayeh explains how, after years of enduring his violence, she, her sister and mother conspired to kill her father. Khatereh details how she was abused by her uncle and beaten by her mother. The girls are given Aids tests. Ziba is visited by her husband and children; the other girls spend time with Ziba's baby, holding and bathing it. 651 shows her diary, in which she illustrates events from her life. An art therapist visits and encourages the girls to express themselves by playing with puppets. Khatereh is encouraged to return to her family, a fate she passionately resists. A meeting with her family goes well, however, and she is hopeful as she is released into their care. 651 is also released, into the care of her grandmother.

Cameraperson

USA 2016
Director: Kirsten Johnson
Certificate 15 102m 0s

See Feature on page 40

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

"I'll tell them it's a movie," says a driver taking Kirsten Johnson to a Yemeni prison housing al-Qaeda suspects. "It is a movie!" comes her response. Elsewhere in space and time, a twinkly quantum physicist tells Johnson, "There's another, underlying layer of nature that we haven't discovered yet."

So this scrapbook of footage drawn from Johnson's 25 years as a documentary 'cameraperson' shuffles and throws up fleeting moments that together form an exploration of how art and 'real life' interact, how memories form and what it means to bear witness. As it weaves through her filming experiences in her native United States, in Nigeria, Liberia and Rwanda, in Bosnia and Afghanistan – sometimes providing full context for interviews or observational material, sometimes letting the audience wonder or guess – the film emphasises the human element in cinematography.

Johnson's footage is rarely beautiful; this is no sizzle reel of magic-hour lens flare or startling symmetries. Rather, Johnson has opted for moments in which her camera jiggles, fails and bumps into things. Behind it, we hear her sneeze, gasp, curse and cry – and frequently just not know what to do next. To behave, in other words, not as an impartial, impassive human camera, nor as an artist constantly fired by divine inspiration, but as a working person and emotional being. At least as much as it strives to show us Johnson's personal working practices and individual character, *Cameraperson* reminds us that the fluidity and cohesion of a film is as illusory in documentary as in fiction filmmaking – not the reproduction of a complete, naturally occurring and 'true' narrative, but the product of a long chain of choices, biases, compromises and chance occurrences.

Some sequences do seem to unfold with spontaneous force and symmetry. You'd struggle to find any piece of scripted drama more heated, unpredictable and finally touching than that in which a beaten Brooklyn boxer bursts from the ring, furious and heartbroken, charges back in the direction of his opponent, pursued by Johnson's camera, and ends up in the arms of his mother. Elsewhere, however, stories tell themselves scrappily, untidily, and with uncertain meaning.

Then there's the even less conspicuous process of moral decision-making, also exposed to scrutiny here. *Cameraperson* is haunted – as one senses Johnson may be – by the question of whether and how much documentary filmmakers should intervene in the lives of their subjects. An on-camera offer by Michael Moore to assist with the legal issues of a conscientious objector filmed for *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), which Johnson shot, sounds vague and showy even as he makes it; an interviewee for Dawn Porter's *Trapped* (2016), who tearfully explains her decision to terminate her pregnancy, is vocally comforted by the off-camera crew, Johnson among them. But in a further clip filmed in Bosnia, Johnson holds back on intervening in a potentially disastrous encounter between a small child and an axe. The challenge of maintaining this simultaneously active and passive role finds its rawest depiction in sequences shot in a Nigerian hospital. As a taciturn midwife in a seriously under-equipped hospital attempts to save the life of an oxygen-deprived newborn, Johnson is a helpless observer; as viewers, we crave a clear narrative progression that reality staunchly refuses to provide.

That the stricken baby is the second of twins is echoed in our glimpses of Johnson's own twin children, whose brief appearances in the film provide a sense of time moving on – as well as a meaningful chink in Johnson's own privacy. By filming her children before they are old enough to give consent, is Johnson intruding on their rights? What about her own mother, also filmed here, and distanced from any decision-making by Alzheimer's? Johnson broadens the question by segueing from footage of her children discussing a proper burial for a dead bird to a Syrian filmmaker asking how respect can be preserved for victims of atrocities. "How do we represent horror, represent death, whilst respecting the golden rule – dignity?"

This query reverberates through a film that turns a weary gaze on suffering and cruelty, at one point simply listing with brief landscape shots the locations of historical horrors, from Wounded Knee to Rwanda to the World Trade Center. The film also asks: what of the one who does the representing? How is the filmmaker affected by absorbing the misery of others? Again, Johnson lets her own experience show through the testimonies of her interviewees. "What is your channel to let it go?" asks a Bosnian translator who has listened to innumerable stories of rape. One answer, for Johnson, is a renegotiation of memory: a privileging of the positive. The worst war stories she heard in Bosnia have, she finds, been overwritten by happy memories of the rural farming family she met and filmed there. The mind is an unreliable witness; and memory, just like a filmmaker, elects what to foreground and what to edit out.

Snap decisions: Kirsten Johnson

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Marilyn Ness
Kirsten Johnson
Filmed by
Kirsten Johnson
Edited by
Nels Bangerter
Re-recording Mixers
Pete Horner
Eric Milano

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Production Companies
Fork Films presents a Big Mouth production
A film by Kirsten Johnson
Fiscal Sponsor: Women Make Movies, Inc.

Executive Producers
Abigail Disney
Gini Reticker

In Colour
[1.78:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Dogwoof

A documentary drawn from footage from the 25-year career of cinematographer and director Kirsten Johnson. Johnson films a rural family in Foca, Bosnia; a young boxer in Brooklyn; and a maternity ward in Kano, Nigeria. Over the years and for different projects, she tracks the French philosopher Jacques Derrida through the streets of Manhattan; interviews a Texas prosecutor about a racist murder in which a black man was dragged to his death behind a pick-up truck; and is prevented by guards from filming at a Yemeni prison detaining al-Qaeda suspects. Between trips abroad, Johnson also films her own twin children as well as her elderly father and her mother, who has Alzheimer's disease, at their farm in Washington State. Back in Nigeria, Johnson films a midwife struggling to save a baby without a working incubator or supply of oxygen. The Brooklyn boxer loses his fight, and is consoled by his mother. A series of shots lists the locations of conflicts and atrocities where Johnson has worked: Wounded Knee, Tahrir Square, Liberia, Rwanda, the World Trade Center, Sarajevo and Camp X-Ray, Guantanamo Bay. She returns to Bosnia and shows her family the footage she shot of them five years before.

Collateral Beauty

USA 2016
Director: David Frankel
Certificate 12A 96m 31s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

A draft of Allan Loeb's screenplay for *Collateral Beauty* bears on its first page the words: "This is a fable... remember those?" Besides the fact that his career is heavier on lowbrow comedies such as *Just Go With It* (2011) than his (at the time, anyway) critically acclaimed drama *Things We Lost in the Fire* (2007), there are other reasons for Loeb to be pre-emptively defensive. *Beauty*'s premise is, to put it sympathetically, ambitious; more bluntly, it's ridiculous. Two years after his daughter's death, advertising executive Howard Inlet (Will Smith) is a mess: non-functioning at work, personally catatonic. The once prosperous company he built may go out of business unless a crucial sale is made. His partners, led by co-founder/alleged best friend Whit (Edward Norton), decide to spy on him for reasons too complicated to explain here, and eventually hire a trio of actors to play Love, Time and Death, to whom Inlet has written angry letters.

There are many different moving parts to *Collateral Beauty*, a movie as bad as its title promises. (The phrase is repeated in a line that, of course, is deployed twice, and it never makes sense when related to the death of a child: "Just remember to notice the collateral beauty.") Inlet is presented initially as a gung-ho corporate honcho ("the poet-philosopher of product", per Whit), who motivates his employees with speeches beginning, "What is your why?" Note that this is meant to be taken seriously: the film's tonal components include a distinct air of both management seminars and the Ted talks of which actor Smith is said to be fond. The set-up – in which Inlet (who won't let anyone in!) is monitored, his habits predicted and encounters with Love/Time/Death arranged – resembles *The Game* (1997) via Garry Marshall's comparably saccharine *Dear God* (1996), in which Greg Kinnear's do-gooder post-office agent answers the undeliverable letters of the despairing and hopeful to the

Bad for business: Will Smith, Helen Mirren

Supreme Deity. All of this is contextualised by the film's Christmastime setting, meaning that the reconciliation of all with all is a mandate.

Director David Frankel (*The Devil Wears Prada*, *Hope Springs*) deploys talented DP Maryse Alberti (*Creed*) in the least ambitious way possible: it's poorly matched over-the-shoulder close-ups and medium shots all the way through, intercut with helicopter views and other stock library visual padding. Loeb's sense of philosophy includes such feelgood gems as "Nothing's ever really dead if you look at it right." That the film confidently attempts to merge the boardroom struggles of the very wealthy with the alleged 'big questions' (via superficial skimmings of Buddhism et al) is plainly risible, in so many different ways that to explicate them would require a review ten times the length. A statement Loeb made in an interview a few years ago, about lowbrow work versus ambitious projects, clarifies the prevailing mentality: "I can cash a big cheque and be fulfilled at the same time... I guess that's called being a hack." Also this advice to young writers, indistinguishable from his protagonist's voice: "This is not poetry or Ibsen... It's a business and you're building a product with a team of people."

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Bard Dorros
Michael Sugar
Allan Loeb
Anthony Bregman
Kevin Frakes
Written by
Allan Loeb
Director of Photography
Maryse Alberti
Edited by
Andrew Marcus
Production Designer
Beth Mickle
Music
Theodore Shapiro
Sound Mixer
Danny Michael
Costumes Designed by
Leah Katznelson

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Production Companies
New Line Cinema presents in association with Village Roadshow Pictures, RatPac-Dune Entertainment an Anonymous Content/Overbrook Entertainment production
A Palmstar Media and Likely Story production
A David Frankel Film
Executive Producers
Toby Emmerich
Richard Brener
Michael Disco
Steven Mnuchin
Michael Bederman
Ankur Rungta
Peter Cron
Steven Pearl
Bruce Berman

Cast
Will Smith
Howard Inlet
Edward Norton
Whit Yardsham
Keira Knightley
Amy Moore, 'Love'
Michael Peña
Simon Scott
Naomie Harris
Madeline
Jacob Latimore
Raffi, 'Time'
Kate Winslet
Claire Wilson
Helen Mirren
Brigitte, 'Death'

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros. Pictures International (UK)

New York, the present. Two years after the death of his daughter, advertising executive Howard Inlet is not performing at work and has no personal life. His friends and employees – including agency co-founder and best friend Whit – decide that for their financial survival they must document his mental incompetence and take over his shares to facilitate a sale of the company. Whit hires a private detective, who learns that Howard has been writing letters to Love, Time and Death, venting his anger. Whit and co-workers Simon and Claire hire an acting troupe to embody the three abstractions to jolt Howard back to life. Meanwhile, divorced Whit rebuilds his relationship with his estranged adolescent daughter, unmarried workaholic Claire worries about finding a sperm donor before she is too old to have a child, and Simon must reveal to his family that he has terminal cancer. Howard is initially sceptical of Love, Time and Death's reality but is convinced by repeated encounters, which lead him to attend a support group for parents who have lost their children. The detective videotapes Howard's interactions with the actors, then digitally erases the performers to make it appear as if he is talking to no one, embarrassing him at a board meeting. He approves the sale of the company. The leader of the support group is revealed to be Howard's estranged ex-wife; they reconcile.

Crash & Burn

Ireland/United Kingdom 2016
Director: Seán Ó Cualáin
Certificate 15 85m 47s

Reviewed by Geoffrey Macnab

Crash & Burn plays like a version of award-winning documentary *Senna*, seen through the eyes of novelist Roddy Doyle. Its subject, Tommy Byrne, was a brilliant driver who did indeed race with Ayrton Senna for the Van Diemen team in the early 1980s. But where Senna was well spoken, charismatic and from an affluent Brazilian background, Byrne was a scrappy and pugnacious Irishman who invariably managed to antagonise team bosses and potential patrons. He was a hard-drinking womaniser with a rare ability to put his foot in his mouth.

Director Seán O Cualáin sticks close to the contours of the typical sports documentary, throwing in interviews with Byrne and other drivers and friends (including Eddie Jordan and John Watson) alongside the archive footage. It's an entertaining yarn, well told and deliberately left open-ended. Byrne had far more ability than many drivers who went on to make their fortunes in Formula 1. But he was a working-class Irishman from the wrong side of the tracks, and his face didn't fit with the corporate, image-conscious world of top-level driving. "It hasn't been a terrible life. I just lost out on about $100m," Byrne observes at one point.

The film leaves it up to us to decide whether or not Byrne is a victim. For all his moments of bitterness, he's still alive (unlike Senna), as contrary as ever and appears relatively contented. As he half-acknowledges, he did as much as anyone else to sabotage his career.

On the wrong track: Tommy Byrne

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
David Burke
Director of Photography
Ray MacDonnacha
Editor
John Murphy
Music
Ray Harman
Sound
Alan Poole

©Dot Television & Film
Production Companies
Dot TV & Film/Mordán Films presents in association with Bord Scannán na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board, Raidió Teilifís Éireann, BBC Northern Ireland
Developed with the assistance of Bord Scannán na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board
Executive Producers
for Bord Scannán na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board: Keith Potter
for RTÉ: Colm O'Callaghan
for BBC: Deirdre Devlin

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Wildcard Distribution

A documentary about Irish racing driver Tommy Byrne. In the 1980s, Byrne was a star driver in Formula Ford and Formula 3, but his abrasive, hard-drinking character antagonised team bosses and he failed to fulfil his potential as a Formula 1 driver. He has since built a career as an advanced driving coach.

Danny Says

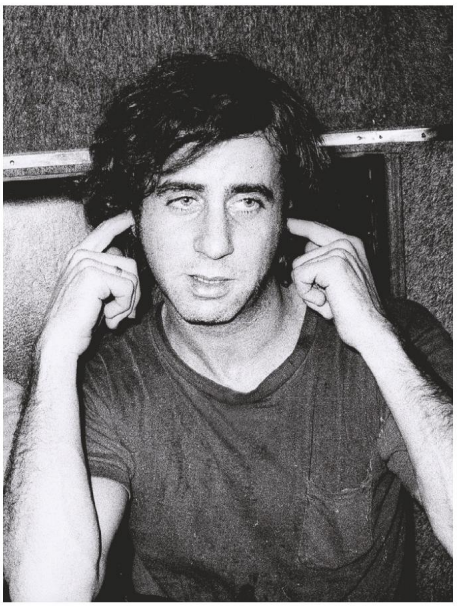
USA 2015
Director: Brendan Toller

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Danny Says is a rock documentary about a guy who is most assuredly not a rock star. Here, in archival photographs from the 1960s and 70s, is a very slightly chubby guy with an unmanageable head of hair and a crooked smile, looking as if he shouldn't belong with the rock aristocrats he's posing next to – but at the same time as if he absolutely does. That guy is Danny Fields, described in the dedication of 1997 oral-history classic *Please Kill Me* as "forever the coolest guy in the room".

Fields was an all-purpose scenester, a confidant to Linda Eastman and Nico, an ink-stained wretch at teen rock rags, a DJ, a band manager and an in-house 'freak' for Elektra Records – a 'freak' being the industry term for someone who was perceived to have a direct line to what was going on in the underground at any given moment. In trying to explain Fields's importance, Iggy Pop – whose band, The Stooges, Fields was responsible for signing – puts it most succinctly, explaining that he was "a connector, like a fuel line in a car". Iggy, in his interview here, has put on a vest as concession to weather or the passage of time, though he proudly displays an otherwise bare, reddened torso, while Fields, narrating his life from a New York apartment crammed with records and other mementos, appears in a more conservative dark sweater.

In taking Fields as a subject, director Brendan Toller has selected a guide whose perambulations touch on many of the more storied chapters of rock 'n' roll history, from the full blossoming of the 1960s counterculture, through the Motor City proto-punk groundswell represented by The Stooges and the MC5, to the emergence of the Ramones, for whom Fields operated as manager, a thankless duty that was rewarded with the song 'Danny Says'. Well into his seventies, the soggy-voiced Fields remains in pretty good fettle as a raconteur, exhibiting zero self-importance or self-censoriousness, a wry sense of humour and a fondness for wordplay and bits of corny, archaic slang – "chateroonie" and so forth. As a gay man he shows especial relish when recollecting with nostalgia the libertinage of pre-Stonewall, pre-liberation gay life in Greenwich Village. ("We never came out to our parents," says



Only connect: Danny Fields

the photographer Leee Black Childers, in what must've been one of his final recorded interviews. "What'd we want to upset those old people for?")

In all respects other than its unorthodox choice of middleman-as-subject, *Danny Says* sticks to the hidebound rock-doc template. This means lots of talking heads interspersed with desperate-to-entertain animated interstitials, here illustrating Fields's juicier stories – cruising the promenade in Brooklyn Heights in the 1950s, spoiling the fun at the Warhol Factory by foiling superstar Ivy Nicholson's attempted autodefenestration, babysitting a drug-addled Jim Morrison – which, along with much else, ought to be familiar to *Please Kill Me* readers. There's archival footage, too, including some good deep bends and hip-shimmy from Mr Pop in his primal prime – very likely some of the same material that surfaces in Jim Jarmsuch's *Gimme Danger*. There's only so much rock history left to feed off, though enough here to make some comfort food for the *Mojo* subscriber, if not documentary art that is, borrowing one of Fields's studied malapropisms, "pushing the bucket... or cutting the envelope".

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Pamela Lubell
Written by
Brendan Toller
Edited by
Ian Markiewicz
Tim Sternberg

Brendan Toller
Original Music
Henri Scars Struck
Animation
Johnny Woods
Matt Newman
Emily Hubley

Max Rosenthal

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Production Companies
Fiscal sponsor: New York Foundation for the Arts
With support from Kickstarter, New York Foundation for the Arts, Creative Media Institute, NYSCA, Final Frame

Executive Producers
Pamela Moschetti
Bill Hobbs
William O'Donnell

In Colour
[1.78:1] and [1.37:1]

Distributor
MusicFilmNetwork

A documentary looking back on the life of Danny Fields, a key figure on the US musical scene in the 1970s and 1980s, as told by Fields in the present day from his cluttered New York apartment.

He is born Daniel Feinberg in New York in 1939. A preternaturally gifted student, he explores his homosexuality while at university of Pennsylvania and at Harvard. On his return to New York, Danny drifts towards the bohemian circle that has formed around Andy Warhol, which includes The Velvet Underground & Nico. Working at teen fan magazine 'Datebook' and hosting a radio show, Feinberg, now Fields, establishes himself on the rock scene; he is hired by Elektra Records to handle its new property, The Doors, but soon falls out with lead singer Jim Morrison. In Detroit, he sees performances by the MC5 and The Stooges, and is responsible for Elektra signing both bands. After falling out with The Stooges over their reckless, destructive behaviour, Fields takes managerial control of the Ramones, arranging for them to tour England, where their performance style informs the nascent punk movement.

Fields recollects early encounters with the likes of Patti Smith and Jonathan Richman, and remembers friends who have passed away.

Denial

USA/United Kingdom 2016
Director: Mick Jackson
Certificate 12A 109m 42s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

It's been a long time since we've had a worthwhile movie from British-born director Mick Jackson. Back in the early 1990s he looked like an up-and-coming talent with *L.A. Story* and *The Bodyguard* to his credit. But since then there's been nothing from him for the big screen worth lingering over; his most recent feature was the deservedly forgotten would-be comedy *The First $20 Million* (2002). So it's good to welcome him back with a film of substance and dramatic power.

It helps, of course, to have a subject as resonant as the 'Holocaust Trial' of 1998, and a script by David Hare. Three years after Jewish American historian Deborah E. Lipstadt published her book *Denying the Holocaust* in 1993, she found herself being sued for libel by the British historian David Irving. Irving, a self-described 'moderate fascist', the biographer of Hitler and an apologist for the Nazi regime, had repeatedly denied the existence of gas chambers and death camps in the Third Reich, and Lipstadt had denounced him in her book. Now, Irving embarked on an action against her and her publishers, Penguin Books, on the grounds that they had smeared him as an anti-Semite and called his competence as a historian into question.

The action kicks off with a highly dramatic confrontation, when Irving (Timothy Spall) shows up at one of Lipstadt's lectures at an American university and aggressively interrupts her presentation, challenging her to a debate. Lipstadt (Rachel Weisz) refuses to debate with him, only to find herself being sued for libel in the High Court in London. Irving, as her solicitor Anthony Julius (Andrew Scott) explains, has chosen to sue in England for the very good reason that, under English law, the burden of proof in a libel case falls on the defence. In other words, Lipstadt, along with Penguin Books, is deemed guilty unless proven innocent. (In US courts it would be the other way about.)

Denial makes much of Lipstadt's wide-eyed disbelief at this revelation. Throughout most of the film, in fact, she remains in a state of astonishment at the trappings and labyrinthine conventions of British society. "I don't mind Dickensian," she protests, "it's Kafkaesque I'm afraid of." When she first enters the Law Courts on the Strand, we see her gazing up aghast at the pseudo-medieval flummery – banners, tapestries and the like – that adorn the ceiling of the Victorian Gothic entrance hall, and the polite restraint and evasions of middle-class Britain repeatedly provoke her incomprehension. This is all a little overdone – Lipstadt is, after all, introduced to us as a leading academic historian, not an open-mouthed rube from the boondocks on her first visit to Yurrup – and Weisz now and then overplays the brash Yankee. Still, she takes a fair stab at a New York (and specifically Queens) accent, and the culture-clash element makes for some pointed comedy – as when, invited to dinner with prominent members of London Jewish society and urged to settle with Irving out of court, she rounds on them for stinginess as well as cowardice. But her repeated visits to the statue of Boadicea by Westminster Bridge are a nudge too far.

The meat of the film, though, is the trial,

False witness: Rachel Weisz

where David Hare's script sticks closely to the transcript. A battle of wits, and words, between Lipstadt's barrister Richard Rampton (Tom Wilkinson) and Irving (who represents himself), it avoids the over-theatricality of most courtroom movies while never lacking drama. Wilkinson, who gradually allows Rampton's contempt for his adversary to show through his lawyerly detachment, gives a performance of masterly control, calmly marshalling his evidence, often with passages plucked from Irving's own insanely verbose diary (as many as 20 million words, we're told), and systematically closing off each avenue as the maverick historian attempts yet another diversionary tactic.

But – not for the first time – Spall all but walks off with the movie. As Irving, pouting, snorting, beetling his brows in pained disbelief, he comes close to convincing us, not that his repellent views are true, but that he sincerely holds them. Playing to the (press) gallery, he deftly tosses them nuggets of misinformation that wind up on the placards. His bid for sympathy by mentioning his infant daughter, though, backfires on him when Rampton reveals (again quoting from the diaries) that he taught the child to sing a racist song in public.

The trial scenes are bookended by reminders of the deeper significance of the legal dispute. Before it starts, Lipstadt and her defence team pay a winter visit to Auschwitz to examine the remains of the camp (where Rampton picks up a fragment of barbed wire that he keeps as a talisman). And in the final shot, snow falls on the shattered roof of the gas chamber whose existence Irving denied. Truth has triumphed – but it's a bitter truth.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Gary Foster
Russ Krasnoff
Screenplay
David Hare
Based on the book *Denial: Holocaust History on Trial* by Deborah E. Lipstadt
Director of Photography
Haris Zambarloukos
Editor
Justine Wright
Production Designer
Andrew McAlpine
Music
Howard Shore
Production Sound Mixer
Danny Hambrook
Costume Designer
Odile Dicks-Mireaux

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Production Companies
Bleecker Street presents in association with Participant Media and BBC Films a Krasnoff/Foster Entertainment production with Shoebox Films
Executive Producers
Andrew Karpen
Guy Heeley
Christine Langan
Joe Oppenheimer
Jeff Skoll
Jonathan King

Cast
Rachel Weisz
Deborah Lipstadt
Tom Wilkinson
Richard Rampton
Timothy Spall
David Irving
Andrew Scott
Anthony Julius
Jack Lowden
James Libson
Caren Pistorius
Laura Tyler
Alex Jennings
Sir Charles Gray
Harriet Walter
Vera Reich

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
E1 Films

DeKalb College, Georgia, 1994. American historian Deborah Lipstadt is giving a lecture based on her book 'Denying the Holocaust'. She makes a dismissive reference to British historian David Irving, a prominent Holocaust denier. Her lecture is aggressively interrupted by Irving himself.

Two years later, Lipstadt learns that Irving is suing her for libel in the British courts. She flies to London, where her solicitor, Anthony Julius, explains that under British law it's up to the defence to prove the alleged libel is true. Barrister Richard Rampton is retained for the defence. Lipstadt, Julius and Rampton travel to Auschwitz to examine evidence of gas chambers, which Irving claims never existed. Lipstadt finds Rampton cold and detached.

Julius explains to Lipstadt that neither she nor any Holocaust survivors will be called as witnesses. She protests, but Julius remains firm. The trial opens in the Law Courts under Mr Justice Gray, with Irving conducting his own case. Eminent historians are called; Rampton launches a sustained attack on Irving, citing his previous anti-Semitic, pro-Hitler remarks. Rampton visits Lipstadt in her lodgings and she realises that beneath his measured stance he feels passionately about the case. Before retiring to consider his verdict, the judge asks whether anti-Semitic views can be sincerely held, sowing doubt among the defence team. He then takes a month to release his judgement: Lipstadt was justified in her comments, and Irving stands convicted of anti-Semitic lies. The defence team celebrate, while on TV Irving is talking as if he has won.

Gold

Director: Stephen Gaghan

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Set in the late 1980s and loosely based on a true story, Stephen Gaghan's tale of a washed-up businessman who refuses to lie down and die is one of those unmistakably American tales that simultaneously glorify and critique the power of money.

Matthew McConaughey plays Kenny Wells, a force of nature in a crumpled suit and a comb-over, who literally has a dream about a gold mine and sets out to Indonesia to make it happen. His passionate belief in his own impending wealth and status flattens every obstacle in his path, and he has soon teamed up with a geologist, Michael Acosta (played with scene-stealing charisma by Edgar Ramírez), who has a nose for gold and a particular location in mind. Of course, the loot is not going to leap from the ground and into their pockets; there is some nail-biting business with core samples and mutinous local workers to be got through first, but soon Kenny is waking up from a malarial fever to the news that Michael's hunch was right: they are sitting on a fortune. From there, it ought to be plain sailing, but the film has only reached the end of the first act: Kenny must now take on the evil money men who are plotting to rip him off. The jungles of Wall Street turn out to be more perilous than anything Indonesia can throw at him, and in the end the American Dream has another joker up its sleeve.

It takes an actor of McConaughey's skill to make a monster like Kenny Wells halfway likeable, but the film strikes a careful tonal balance: Kenny's numerous shortcomings as a functional human being are writ large, yet we are asked to admire his fast-talking indefatigability even as we shake our heads at his childlike faith that grit and chutzpah will triumph in the end. It's down to his long-suffering girlfriend Kay (Bryce Dallas Howard, bravely making the best of her limited screen time) to be the token woman in this testicle-fest, inevitably standing for all that is good and truly valuable in life,

Matthew McConaughey, Edgar Ramírez

but of course Kenny's paper-thin affection for her is soon burnt away in the fire of his ambition. A pity, because the film would have benefited from a more nuanced depiction of Kay to soak up some of the technically flawless but somewhat overwhelming craft of McConaughey's Oscar-bait central performance.

Marinated in booze and encased in cigarette smoke, Kenny is certainly a creature of the late 20th century, but his story has curious resonances in a Trump world where an obsession with power and gold can be reframed as the wholesome core values of the aspiring Mr Average rather than the avarice of a hollowed-out, morally bankrupt kleptocrat. In the end, the film pulls back from any overly bracing conclusions about money and greed, but when push comes to shove, it asks some interesting questions about innocence, ambition and reward.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Teddy Schwarzman
Michael Nozik
Producers
Matthew McConaughey
Patrick Massett
John Zinman
Written by
Patrick Massett
John Zinman
Director of Photography
Robert Elswit
Edited by
Douglas Crise
Production Designer
Maria Djurkovic
Music
Daniel Pemberton
Production Sound Mixer
Rodney Gurule
Costume Designer
Danny Glicker

Production Companies
TWC-Dimension presents in association with Boies/Schiller Films a Black Bear Pictures production
A Highway 61 Films production
A film by Stephen Gaghan
Executive Producers
Paul Haggis
Richard Middleton
Ben Stillman

Cast
Matthew McConaughey
Danny Wells
Édgar Ramírez
Michael Acosta
Bryce Dallas Howard
Kay
Corey Stoll
Brian Woolf
Toby Kebbell
Jennings
Stacy Keach
Clive Coleman
Craig T. Nelson
Bruce Greenwood

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

US and Indonesia, 1988. Failed entrepreneur Kenny Wells tells an interviewer his story.

In flashback, we see Kenny, who has been kicked out of the mining business he inherited from his father, searching desperately for opportunities. He hears that legendary geologist Michael Acosta is looking for a backer for an Indonesian gold mine, tracks him down and does a deal. He scrapes together the money for some exploratory work, but while in the Indonesian jungle he contracts malaria. When he comes out of his fever he finds Michael ecstatic: the early samples indicate a huge seam of gold. Returning to the US, Kenny finds his old company happy to take him back, and news of the gold mine soon attracts the attention of Wall Street. Kenny's girlfriend Kay warns him that the bankers will not play fair; he has a row with her and she leaves him, but the investors do indeed try to take over the company. Kenny and Michael outmanoeuvre them and their fortunes are made. However, the following day news arrives that the geological samples have been faked and the mine is worthless. Acosta has disappeared after cashing in millions of dollars.

Kenny's interviewer, now revealed to be an FBI investigator, tells him that because he is now penniless, the FBI believes he was a victim too. He is released. He returns, a broken man, to Kay, who gives him some letters that have arrived for him. Among them is a cheque from Michael for several million dollars – he was a loyal friend after all.

Hacksaw Ridge

Australia/USA/United Kingdom/People's Republic of China 2016
Director: Mel Gibson
Certificate 15 139m 14s

Reviewed by Guy Westwell

Hacksaw Ridge is Mel Gibson's fifth feature as director and marks an improbable return from the filmmaking wilderness following a number of career-wreckingly racist, anti-Semitic and misogynistic outbursts. It tells the story of religious conscientious objector Desmond T. Doss, a US army medic who single-handedly rescued 75 comrades under heavy fire on Okinawa during World War II. Doss's heroism was truly remarkable and he deserves every acclaim, but considering the film's orthodoxy one wonders if the audience who gave it a ten-minute standing ovation at Venice this year might have been mistaking the movie for the man.

After an hour of sub-Nicholas Sparks home-front melodrama, we follow a rifle company through basic training and into the thick of battle. Throughout, Gibson never knowingly underuses an emotionally manipulative technique. Slow motion, an overly emphatic musical score, grimly determined acting and pyrotechnic showmanship shape every scene of import. The battle sequences follow the well-worn groove established by *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and others: viscera spill and spatter, legs are torn to tattered shreds, men fall like pins in the face of Japanese machine-gunners. Stoicism, selflessness and courage are the order of the day. And in one powerful set piece, the sheer physical terror of facing a Japanese banzai charge is successfully conveyed – but we have surely been here before.

The film focuses on conscientious objection, but the intrinsic drama of this subject (think Edward Snowden or Chelsea Manning) is lost to a celebration of conformity and containment. Despite an hour or more focused on Doss's early life, we learn next to nothing about the tenets or cultural experience of Seventh-day Adventism, the specific religious faith that informs his worldview. The only scene that genuinely seeks to articulate Doss's refusal to carry a rifle is a brief conversation with an army psychiatrist, but this has none of the intelligent nuance of the equivalent scene in Howard Hawks's *Sergeant York* (1941), in which

Life saver: Andrew Garfield

the Constitution and the Bible go head-to-head. Andrew Garfield does a good enough job of displaying Doss's mettle, yet the lack of any sense of his inner life or genuine contradiction in the military context severely reduces the drama. When the men bully and beat Doss, we know that it is an opportunity for him to express his stoicism rather than a genuine crisis in response to his difference. His court martial – which is resolved via the re-establishment of patriarchal authority – is a lost opportunity to explore how his beliefs cause crisis in the very fabric of US society.

Ultimately, Doss's refusal to bear arms is shown to be a personal choice that doesn't threaten the wider system. He is a patriot aligned with US war aims who works tirelessly to ensure that the army prevails. The US will accept – and even defend – difference, the film seems to argue, as long as that difference is recognisable and fully assimilable. As with Gibson's earlier work, pain and extreme bodily suffering – here in the inferno of battle – are a crucible in which the conservative values of family, faith and firepower are forged. (Similar themes were also found in *We Were Soldiers*, which starred Gibson and was written and directed by Randall Wallace, who wrote an early version of the script.) In this the film has the certainty, coherence and joined-up thinking of propaganda, a belligerent sincerity that in our jaded postmodern times might be mistaken for distinction.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Bill Mechanic
David Permut
Terry Benedict
Paul Currie
Bruce Davey
Brian Oliver
William D. Johnson
Screenplay
Robert Schenkkan
Andrew Knight
Director of Photography
Simon Duggan
Editor
John Gilbert

Production Designer
Barry Robison
Music
Rupert Gregson-Williams
Sound Recordist
Peter Grace
Costume Designer
Lizzy Gardiner
Stunt Co-ordinators
Mic Rodgers
Kyle Gardiner

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Production Companies
Summit Entertainment and Cross Creek Pictures present in association with Demarest Media and Argent Pictures
Produced in association with IM Global, AI Film Productions, Vendian Entertainment and Kylin Pictures
A Pandemonium Films/Permut Presentations production
A Mel Gibson film
Executive Producers
David Greathouse
Stuart Ford
Tyler Thompson
Eric Greenfeld
Rick Nicita
Len Blavatnik
Lawrence Bender
Lauren Selig
Christopher Woodrow
Michael Bassick
James M. Vernon
Buddy Patrick
Suzanne Warren
Lenny Kornberg
Mark C. Manuel
Ted O'Neal

Cast
Andrew Garfield
Desmond Doss
Sam Worthington
Captain Jack Glover
Luke Bracey
Smitty Ryker
Teresa Palmer
Dorothy Schutte
Hugo Weaving
Tom Doss
Rachel Griffiths
Bertha Doss
Vince Vaughn
Sergeant Howell
Nathaniel Buzolic
Harold Doss, 'Hal'

Dolby Atmos
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

Lynchburg, Virginia, 1930s. As a child, Desmond Doss climbs a mountain with his brother Harold. At home they fight, and Doss hits Harold with a brick, seriously injuring him. As a young man, Doss falls in love with a nurse and, against the wishes of his drunken and violent father, signs up to fight in WWII. He joins an infantry unit and undertakes basic training; he excels but, due to his strong religious convictions, refuses to bear arms. As a result he is subjected to sanctioned bullying and is court-martialled, but he remains resolute and achieves his goal of becoming an army medic. At Okinawa, Doss's rifle company assaults a ridge held by Japanese forces; the men suffer heavy casualties. During a second assault they again come under heavy fire. As they withdraw, Doss remains and single-handedly rescues 75 injured men, as well as some Japanese casualties.

The film closes with documentary footage that describes how Doss was the first conscientious objector to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

Holy Cow

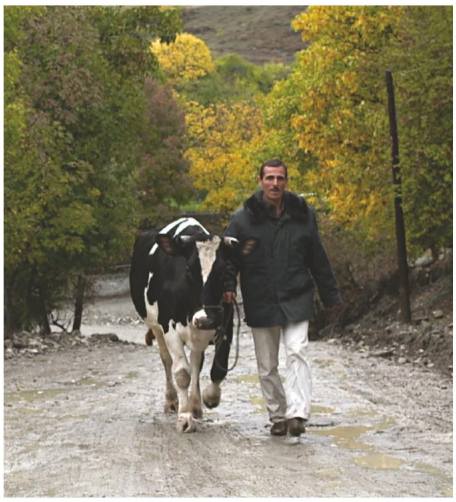
Azerbaijan/Germany/Romania/Qatar/USA/Georgia/Czech Republic/The Netherlands 2015
Director: Imam Hasanov

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

Simple in its characterisation, languorous in its pacing and low on incident even for a film of only 77 minutes' duration, this story of a challenge to convention in the highly traditional Azerbaijani village of Lahic aims for the naive force of a parable or a children's book. Revealing, wise and joyous moments duly occur, and the visual evocation of a hardscrabble rural life is diligent and often beautiful – though there's a distinctly inorganic vibe at times, as if we're not so much watching events unfold spontaneously as seeing non-professional players enact a premeditated story with a point to make. Precursors to this style are numerous, of course, from the TV trend for 'scripted reality' to the German-Mongolian quasi-documentaries of Byambasuren Davaa, *The Story of the Weeping Camel* (2003) and *The Cave of the Yellow Dog* (2005). Like those films, this is ethnographic observation at a comforting fairytale slant.

But is our protagonist Tapdiq, with his fierce determination to bring an extra-productive and fertile European cow into his highly traditional village, a hero or a villain? The film initially sets up a good old-fashioned conflict between profit-driven globalisation and earthy, unpolluted traditionalism, with Tapdiq seduced by a breed of cow he's seen – "on TV, where else?" – and the elders of the village puritanically appalled by his vaulting ambition. Particularly opposed is a gossipy Greek chorus of village elders, lecturing Tapdiq that "you cannot even bring a cat here from another region". To these men, Tapdiq's scheme is symbolic of the fraught but ongoing efforts to make Azerbaijan more European, in defiance of its highly specific needs and traditions. A European breed of cow represents an unnatural imposition. "Those cows can't climb the mountain," sniffs one elder. "They were built to be on flat land." (The men are also charmingly conscious of the datedness of their own worldview: one debate concludes with the cry, "Let's go to the nursing home; I'm getting old.") Tapdiq's wife Vafa is younger, but takes the same view on cattle; if her opposition to the cow plan is never really explained, it's certainly staunch.

Despite all this negativity, Tapdiq goes right ahead and buys the beast, even expressing his defiance by giving it a nice comic aside of a name. "She's very beautiful," he deadpans on the way back from the purchase, "so I named her Madona. She's gonna be a famous cow."



Milk and money: Xanali Tapdiq Huseynov

From here on in, whether ambition – blonde or otherwise – is good or bad for Lahic is no longer really in question: the film is solidly on the side of the handsome, determined Tapdiq and his ravishing supercow, to whom he displays undeniably touching devotion. Madona duly produces a calf, Alonya, and an impressive enough milk yield for Tapdiq to produce ample cheese to sell at the local market. Vafa is rewarded with a new jumper, which helps to quell her objections; and even the elders make an amusingly complete volte-face. "Bring them!" they declare of those flat-footed foreign cows. "It's all pastures here. They could even bring bison. Bison could have a good life here..." The adoption of new agricultural practices, meanwhile, is finally framed as a source of connectedness and cooperation – which reads as an endearingly positive view of the unfashionable business of globalisation. "We're like family," says Tapdiq as he sells Alonya to a neighbour, "because we have the same cows."

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Andra Popescu
Veronika Janatková
Stefan Kloos
Director of Photography
Sarvar Javadov
Editing
Philipp Gromov
Music Written by
Le Trio Joubran
Sound
Jalil Mamadov

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Production Companies
Free Art, Kloos & Co. Medien, Conset present in co-production with ZDF in collaboration with ARTE with the support of Doha Film Institute, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program a film by Imam Hasanov Development supported by Georgian National Film Center, People in Need, Institute of Documentary Film Developed in the frame of CAUCADOC Project Development Workshop 2012 Developed with the support of the DOK.Incubator Workshop 2015 Production supported by European Cultural Foundation, Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, Beep, Spoon With support from Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation Just Films A production of Free Art, Kloos & Co. Medien, Conset Films

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
DocHouse

Lahic, Azerbaijan, the present. Villager Tapdiq is determined to purchase a European cow, which he believes will produce more milk than local breeds and give birth to more calves. However, the village elders are opposed, arguing that a cow from elsewhere will be ill suited to the mountainous terrain. Villagers regard Tapdiq's ambition as suspicious alignment with European values over local ones. Tapdiq's wife Vafa is particularly unconvinced by the wisdom of investing in an unfamiliar type of animal. But Tapdiq goes ahead and buys the cow, naming her Madona in recognition of her good looks and notoriety. Madona settles in, quickly producing a calf, Alonya, and supplying copious milk. Vafa makes cheese, which Tapdiq sells at market; he uses some of the proceeds to buy her a new jumper. Witnessing Tapdiq's success with Madona, the village elders come around to the idea of livestock from outside. Lacking enough straw to feed both animals over the winter, Tapdiq decides to sell Alonya to a friend in a neighbouring village.

Irreplaceable

France 2016
Director: Thomas Lilti

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

The French title of Thomas Lilti's third feature, after *Les Yeux bandés* (2007) and *Hippocrates* (2014), is *Médecin de campagne*, which translates literally as 'Country Doctor'. It's far more fitting than the title for the English release, *Irreplaceable* (presumably chosen for its resonances with the hugely successful *The Intouchables*, with which it shares a leading man, François Cluzet), not least because the film is essentially a secular version of Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951).

Cluzet plays Jean-Pierre Werner, a firm but fair doctor who has spent the past 20 years tending to his rural community. He wakes early to call on housebound patients, before arriving at his teeming waiting room, where no one, it's clear, goes unseen. However, we learn in the film's opening scene that Jean-Pierre has a brain tumour, and without respite from his work can't hope to survive. He's not best pleased when newly qualified fortysomething Nathalie Delezia (Marianne Denicourt) arrives from the city to offer relief (having been dispatched by Jean-Pierre's consultant), but as the film unfolds he comes to realise that the village might not collapse without him after all, a thought at once consoling and unsettling.

The village's confidant and confessor, the keeper of its secrets (from genital warts to domestic abuse), Jean-Pierre has much in common with Jenny, the heroine of the Dardennes' recent *The Unknown Girl*. But he also calls to mind Brendan Gleeson's Father James in John Michael McDonagh's *Calvary* (2014), facing down a death sentence and using his remaining time to put his house in order. Certainly Lilti, a former doctor himself, seems to see medicine as a kind of calling: Jean-Pierre and Nathalie lead almost monastic existences; what little private lives they have are glimpsed only briefly. We learn that Jean-Pierre's mother lives nearby, that he has a grown-up son and an ex who lives in Paris. Nathalie, meanwhile, was a nurse for ten years before retraining as a doctor. She reveals during an understated scene in which Jean-Pierre gives her a medical exam that she's a smoker and – intriguingly – that she's taking the contraceptive pill. There's scant suggestion of a romance between the two of them, though it's not beyond the bounds of possibility.

In a film where very little happens, and still less is given away, our engagement rests on the shoulders of the lead actors. Happily, Denicourt, who has worked with the likes of Jacques Rivette and Arnaud Desplechin, gives a restrained yet sympathetic performance. And Cluzet is typically excellent: towards the film's end, as the gravity of his situation finally strikes him, Jean-Pierre looks away from Nathalie, and in his searching gaze we suddenly glimpse how lost he is. The camerawork, too, is lean and unobtrusive: as Jean-Pierre hangs in this moment, suspended between his life and its loss, DP Nicholas Gaurin's camera waits with him; then gradually, superimposed over the top, there comes a shot of him cradled in a radiation booth, computers bleeping, and a cut to a screen on which he is mere pixels and cells. Jean-Pierre's enemy is nature; his job, he claims, is to "mend its fuck-ups". Yet these

medical machines that are meant to heal are also, he learns, terribly dehumanising.

So it's a relief when the image gives way to a scene of Jean-Pierre's patients taking part in a community yoga class. As their gathered bodies – fat, frail, ageing and beaten – rise and fall as one, Nina Simone's 'Wild Is the Wind' comes on the soundtrack. "Don't you know you're life itself?" she sings, offering a fittingly humanist response to Bresson's claim that all is grace.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Agnès Vallée
Emmanuel Barraux
Screenplay
Thomas Lilti
Baya Kasmi
Based on an original idea by Thomas Lilti
Cinematography
Nicolas Gaurin
Editor
Christel Dewynter
Art Director
Philippe Van Herwijnen
Music
LoW:
Alexandre Lier
Sylvain Ohrel
Nicolas Weil
Sound
François Guillaume
Raphaël Sohier
Elisabeth Paquotte
Jean-Paul Hurier
Costumes
Dorothée Guiraud

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Production Companies
31 Juin Films, Les Films du Parc, Cinéfrance, Le Pacte presents a film produced by 31 Juin Films, Les Films du Parc
Co-produced by Cinéfrance, Le Pacte, France 2 Cinéma
With the participation of France Télévisions, Canal+, Ciné+
With the support of Région Île-de-France
Associate producer: Sabah 5 Productions
A film by Thomas Lilti
With the participation of Le Pacte, Région Île-de-France in partnership with CNC
Film Extracts
De l'autre côté/ On the Other Side (2008)

Cast
François Cluzet
Jean-Pierre Werner
Marianne Denicourt
Nathalie Delezia
Christophe Odent
Norès
Philippe Bertin
Guy
Patrick Descamps
Francis Maroini
Guy Faucher
Monsieur Sorlin
Julien Lucas
Ninon's fiancé
Margaux Fabre
Ninon
Josée Laprun
Alexis's mother
Yohann Goetzmann
Alexis
Géraldine Schitter
Fanny
Isabelle Sadoyan
Werner's mother
Félix Moati
Vincent Werner

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

French theatrical title
Médecin de campagne

Rural France, the present. Jean-Pierre Werner, a small-town doctor, is diagnosed with a brain tumour and given a 50 per cent chance of survival. Insisting that Jean-Pierre must cut back on his work, his physician Dr Norès sends in newly qualified doctor Nathalie Delezia as relief. Jean-Pierre is hostile towards Nathalie, who has little experience of country practice.

Gradually, Nathalie is accepted by the local community; she forges particular bonds with Alexis, a young autistic man, and Ninon, who is being abused by her fiancé. The relationship between the two doctors thaws, and Jean-Pierre is on the verge of telling Nathalie about his illness when she effectively breaks a promise of his to an elderly patient, Monsieur Sorlin, by admitting him to hospital, sending Jean-Pierre into a fury. Nathalie finds out about Jean-Pierre's cancer when she X-rays him after he sustains an injury at work, but does not confront him about it. Jean-Pierre's condition deteriorates. He refuses experimental treatment and begins to hand over more responsibility to Nathalie. He brings Monsieur Sorlin back from hospital to die at home. He realises that Nathalie knows about his illness, and agrees to undergo radiation therapy.

Some time later, Jean-Pierre's tumour has shrunk. He and Nathalie go about their house calls together.

La La Land

USA/Hong Kong 2016
Director: Damien Chazelle
Certificate 12A 128m 9s

Dance away the heartache: Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone

Reviewed by Erika Balsom

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

A virtuosic long take of a traffic jam, shot in 35mm and rendered in bright Crayola colours? Nice try, cinephiles, but this is not Godard's *Weekend*; it's the opening sequence of Damien Chazelle's *La La Land*, a retro musical with outstanding cinematography that proves Hollywood can do formidable spectacle without superheroes. The film follows Seb (Ryan Gosling) and Mia (Emma Stone) through the seasons as they chase their respective dreams of opening a jazz club and becoming an actress. Jacques Demy, not Godard, is the tutor-text here, as Chazelle's camera weaves and whips around a sun-soaked LA freeway, capturing commuters who have broken into song. *La La Land* remembers when movies were magical and fun, blending nostalgia and contemporaneity in a candy-sweet love letter to cinema.

Seb is stuck playing Christmas songs in a bad restaurant, complaining that his beloved jazz is "dying on the vine", while Mia works as a barista on the Warner Bros. lot and frequents the audition circuit without luck. Each sees in the other the desire for something greater, and they fall in love. Their story is a familiar one: it starts well enough under a wonderfully fake night sky, but real life gets in the way. When Seb achieves success, it is only in financial terms; he betrays his commitment to authenticity by joining a pop group. And to make matters worse, he misses Mia's flop of a one-woman show. With their relationship and her career on the rocks, Mia leaves Los Angeles, only to be lured back for

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Fred Berger
Jordan Horowitz
Gary Gilbert
Marc Platt
Written by
Damien Chazelle
Director of Photography
Linus Sandgren
Film Editor
Tom Cross
Production Designer
David Wasco

Score Composed by
Justin Hurwitz
Lyrics
Benj Pasek
Justin Paul
Re-recording Mixers
Andy Nelson
Ai-Ling Lee
Costume Designer
Mary Zophres
Choreographer
Mandy Moore

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Production Companies
Summit Entertainment presents in association with Black Label Media, TIK Films (Hong Kong) Limited an Impostor Pictures/Gilbert Films production
A Marc Platt production
A Damien Chazelle film
Executive Producers
Molly Smith
Trent Luckinbill
Thad Luckinbill
Jasmine McGlade
Film Extracts
Rebel without a Cause (1955)

Cast
Ryan Gosling
Sebastian
Emma Stone
Mia
John Legend
Keith
Rosemarie DeWitt
Laura
Finn Wittrock
Gregg
Callie Hernandez
Tracy
Sonoya Mizuno
Caitlin
Jessica Rothe
Alexis
Tom Everett Scott
David
Josh Pence
Josh

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.55:1]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

Los Angeles, present day. Mia, an aspiring actress, and Seb, a down-and-out jazz pianist, meet three times before their romance blooms. She works as a barista on the Warner Bros. lot, hoping for her big break. He dreams of opening a club but worries that no one cares about the music he holds dear. They fall in love and nurture each other's ambitions, but trouble arrives when their professional paths diverge. Mia remains true to herself but her one-woman show is a flop; meanwhile Seb becomes a successful musician but only by joining a group with a pop sensibility. Disillusioned, Mia breaks up with Seb, quits acting and returns to her parents' home in Nevada. Seb receives a phone call from a casting agent who saw Mia's show and wants her to go to an audition. Seb drives to Nevada to convince her to attend. Mia and Seb fail to reconcile romantically due to their professional obligations, but part on good terms.

Five years later, Mia is a famous actress, married with a child. She and her husband happen on a buzzing jazz club. It belongs to Seb, who has fulfilled his dream. A fantasy sequence speeds through a vision of the perfect life they might have had together. They exchange no words, but as Mia leaves the club they share an affectionate look.

an audition with a casting agent who was one of the few people in the audience at her show.

Surprisingly, *La La Land* is largely free of the intertextual in-jokes one might expect in such a cinephilic film, its *Rebel Without a Cause* reference aside. Rather, Chazelle concentrates on reviving a sensibility of innocence and romance well represented in film history but relatively absent from today's CGI-addled multiplex fare. He toys with the familiar image of Los Angeles as soul-sucking – best encapsulated in Bertolt Brecht's line that it is "the market where lies are bought" – but only in order to neutralise its power. *La La Land* asks us to truly empathise with Seb and Mia's dreams of making it big, zero irony involved. Compared with the blank pastiche of films such as *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) and *Chicago* (2002), which approach the perils and promises of fame in a knowing play of surfaces, *La La Land* sentimentally resurrects the *démodé* genre of the musical for its wholesome hopefulness and choreographed joy. After postmodernism's much-touted waning of affect, here sincerity is on the rise.

This charm is greatly abetted by the chemistry of Gosling and Stone, happily taking a much stronger turn than in their first two onscreen pairings, *Crazy Stupid Love* (2011) and *Gangster Squad* (2013). Both are super-cute, but neither is exceptionally skilled at singing or dancing. Arguably, this is precisely the point: unlike the untouchable, celestial stars of yesteryear, they are earthy and vulnerable, and all the more loveable for it. The impossible perfection of a Gene Kelly or Ginger Rogers gives way to 21st-century relatability.

Lest this sound too warm and fuzzy, it's worth mentioning that beneath all the pizzazz, *La La Land* delivers what is ultimately a no-nonsense message of individualist drive. Professional success is what counts, no matter how you achieve it and no matter if a few hearts are broken along the way. When Seb and Mia part ways, it's not out of a lack of feeling, but because their careers come first. Like Chazelle's previous film *Whiplash* (2014), *La La Land* examines the compromises and sacrifices involved in the pursuit of creative ambition. But whereas *Whiplash* dwells on the abuse and pain that inhere in this enterprise, *La La Land* keeps it light. Its bittersweet ending, a coda set five years after the film's main events, is undeniably a nod to Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964), but Seb and Mia lead decidedly more glamorous and fulfilled lives than do Demy's characters. She's a famous actress; he owns a thriving club. Judging by the two of them, it pays to get paid and it pays to be yourself – either way, you end up on top. It's love that gets left behind.

The concluding fantasy montage, filled with painted mattes and idealised romance, elevates the film to an even higher level of glorious artifice, but its proclaimed irreality signals that doubly happy endings, in which both the personal and the professional triumph, are possible only in fiction. This literal showstopper warns us not to ask to have it all. Sound depressing? Don't despair: with its saccharine whimsy, *La La Land* reassures us that if we need to feel better, the movies are always there.

Lion

Australia/United Kingdom/USA 2016
Director: Garth Davis
Certificate PG 118m 14s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Lion is a film of two halves: the first half taut and emotionally compelling, the second half increasingly flaccid. Directed by Garth Davis (his feature debut after directing four episodes of the Jane Campion TV series *Top of the Lake*), it's a real-life tale adapted from Saroo Brierley's memoir *A Long Way Home*, and recounts how as a five-year-old boy, born in the Hindi state of Madhya Pradesh, he was accidentally whisked away hundreds of miles on a train and fetched up in the teeming alien city of Kolkata (Calcutta).

This is the terror that powers the first half of *Lion*. After we've been briefly shown Saroo's family life, warm and loving despite the grinding poverty, the nightmare kicks in as the child awakes in the empty, speeding express, his desperate screams for his brother swallowed by the screech of the train's whistle. Then, alone and bewildered in a vast city where he can't even speak the language (Bengali rather than Hindi), Saroo has to contend with hunger, police raids and the deceptive kindness of a woman who, he instinctively realises, has underhand designs on him. He encounters genuine kindness too: a fellow street urchin who offers him a length of cardboard to sleep on, a man in a restaurant who takes pity on him and well-meaningly delivers him to the police. But they, unable to trace his family, send him to a harsh Dickensian orphanage.

Much of the impact of these scenes comes from Sunny Pawar, making his screen debut as the young Saroo. That he has relatively little dialogue scarcely matters; his expressive eyes do the speaking for him, conveying the child's confusion and loneliness with extraordinary conviction. Such vivid pathos is a hard act to follow, and as the adult Saroo, Dev Patel, so effective in *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), never matches it for emotional depth. It's hardly

Lost and found: Rooney Mara, Dev Patel

his fault. Rescued from the orphanage and adopted by a blandly saintly Tasmanian couple (Nicole Kidman and David Wenham, trapped in one-note roles), Saroo grows up remote from his roots, and only a chance encounter with a plateful of *jalebis* (an Indian sweetmeat, the film's equivalent of Proust's madeleine) brings the memories flooding back.

Then, for the next hour or so, Patel is given little to do but look moody and tormented, let his hair grow long, paste maps of Indian railways on the wall and alienate his girlfriend Lucy (Rooney Mara, sadly wasted in an underwritten role). We also get several blatant plugs for Google Earth. Overextended by 20 minutes or more, this section of the film drags badly, and it's a relief when Saroo eventually locates his native village and the action starts plunging towards the inevitable crowd-pleasing finale of the tearful family reunion. A side plot about Saroo's adopted 'brother', the troubled and self-damaging Mantosh, never develops into anything much. This real-life odyssey must have seemed a natural for the cinema; but treated so literally, it feels like half a story with a wearisome coda tacked on.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Emile Sherman
Iain Canning
Angie Fielder
Screenplay
Luke Davies
Adapted from the book *A Long Way Home* by Saroo Brierley
Director of Photography
Greig Fraser
Editor
Alexandre de Franceschi
Production Designer
Chris Kennedy
Music
Dustin O'Halloran
Hauschka
Sound Designer
Robert Mackenzie
Costume Designer
Cappi Ireland

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Production Companies
The Weinstein Company presents
in association with
Screen Australia
a See-Saw Films production
In association with Aquarius Films and Sunstar Entertainment
Developed with the assistance of Narrative Capital
Financed in association with Fulcrum Media Finance
Developed and financed with the assistance of Screen Australia
Executive Producer
Andrew Fraser
Shahen Mekertichian
Daniel Levin
Bob Weinstein
Harvey Weinstein
David C.Glasser

Cast
Dev Patel
Saroo Brierley
Rooney Mara
Lucy
David Wenham
John Brierley
Nicole Kidman
Sue Brierley
Abhishek Bharate
Guddu
Divian Ladwa
Mantosh Brierley
Priyanka Bose
Kamla
Deepti Naval
Mrs Sood
Tannishtha Chatterjee
Noor
Nawazuddin Siddiqui
Rama
Sunny Pawar
young Saroo
Khushi Solanki
young Shekila
Rohini Kargaiya
Shekila

Dolby Atmos
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd

Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh, India, 1986. Five-year-old Saroo lives with his mother Kamla, his sister Shakila and his older brother Guddu. Devoted to his brother, Saroo often accompanies him on scavenging expeditions. One night Guddu leaves Saroo to sleep on a bench at Khandwa station while he goes to find work. Waking up and searching for Guddu, Saroo wanders on to a train, falls asleep again – and finds himself 1,600km away in Kolkata. He roams the streets, evading the police, until he's picked up by a woman, Noor, whose initial kindness turns predatory. Saroo escapes, and fetches up in a brutal orphanage. He is rescued by Mrs Sood, who has him adopted by an Australian couple, Sue and John Brierley. Saroo grows up in Tasmania. The Brierleys adopt another Indian boy, Mantosh, but he's traumatised and self-harming.

Some 20 years later, while studying hotel management, Saroo meets an American girl, Lucy, and they start dating. A chance sight of Indian sweetmeats jogs Saroo's memory; more recollections return, and he becomes obsessed with finding his lost family. Abandoning his studies, he starts searching for clues, but without telling Sue and John what he's doing; his relationship with them, and with Lucy, begins to suffer. Saroo identifies the village where he lived. Revealing to Sue and John what he's been doing, he flies to India and in February 2012 is reunited with his mother and sister, although Guddu has died. Saroo learns that his true name is Sheru, which means 'lion'.

Loving

USA/United Kingdom 2016
Director: Jeff Nichols
Certificate 12A 123m 26s

See Feature on page 36

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Richard and Mildred Loving, the mixed-race couple whose legal challenge to their native Commonwealth of Virginia resulted in a federal ban on anti-miscegenation laws in the US in 1967, were by all accounts quiet country people who kept to themselves, thrust by circumstances into a national spotlight in which they were never entirely comfortable. As presented in Jeff Nichols's *Loving* and played by Joel Edgerton and Ruth Negga, they are folk in the habit of keeping their heads down and minding their own business, and a great deal of this film about epochal changes in American culture is given over to the everyday minutiae that absorb them: Richard laying cinder blocks on the construction site where he works, or poking around under the hood of a car back at home; his mother's practice as a midwife; Mildred's work in the kitchen or at the sewing table; and, of course, the practical exigencies of keeping together a clandestine household while illegally married.

When the cameras and reporters start to show up outside courtrooms and at the Lovings' back-country Virginia hideaway, it's Mildred who gradually begins to act as the spokesperson for their case. She was hardly born for the role, for she could only be considered loquacious by contrast with her tight-lipped husband, rarely heard to utter two complete sentences in quick succession. (Probably a boon, because Edgerton doesn't really have a handle on his Southern twang.) We see the Lovings being spoken at more than we see them being listened to – being lectured to by local law enforcement, who chastise them over the marriage they ought've known better than to enter into, and then by the big-city civil liberties lawyers (comedian Nick Kroll and Jon Bass) who explain the legal circumstances of their situation. But it is their wary diffidence that sets the tone and pace of Nichols's film, which favours curt exchanges and slipping glimpses over grandstanding and high melodrama. There are no burning crosses in the front yard or fistfights here, just unpleasant squints, muttered threats that may or may not be jokes, the little slights that comprise a tacit conspiracy.

The discomfort the Lovings experience when asked to perform the roles of the contently married couple that they in fact are mirrors the movie's unease with performance – as opposed to being. *Loving* has all of the trappings of an awards-season prestige picture – 'based on a true story' bona fides, self-evidently important subject matter that fits the liberal narrative of a long march towards racial equality and more perfect union – but Nichols takes pains to play it against type, planing the material down to a consistently quotidian level. At times he overcorrects too much, for in his emphasising the unremarkableness of the Lovings he also somewhat etiolates them, robbing their union of all but a few hints of conflict and of any evidence of real sexual heat – which at bottom is what all the fuss was about in the first place. Nichols's respect for his subjects is obvious, but it borders on the over-anxious, as though he himself is hesitant to butt in on the privacy they so valued. (To borrow from Charlie Rich, things stay behind closed doors.) This withholding can render powerful effects when emotion does break through, as when Richard's stoicism cracks just long enough to betray his enormous tenderness for his wife, or in the exchanges between Mildred and her younger sister (Terri Abney). But the reliance on brief, clipped scenes keeping to a strict itinerary prevents us getting an unhurried sense of the Lovings' domestic routine, to learn something about them by osmosis, as it were.

The countervailing tensions at work in *Loving* are indicative of a certain irresolution in Nichols's own career. He first appeared on the scene a decade ago with two perfectly calibrated little dramas about small-town life, *Shotgun Stories* (2007) and *Take Shelter* (2011), both starring Michael Shannon – who here has what amounts to a glorified cameo as Grey Villet, the *Life* photographer whose pictures of the Lovings were instrumental in publicising their case. Since going upmarket a notch in budget, box office and star prestige with *Mud* (2012), Nichols has been trying to figure out how to reconcile his minimalist side with the demands of popular filmmaking. Here he has settled for sound if uninspired craftsmanship, a sturdy job of work of the type that his film is often engaged in documenting, as in the concluding scene, which finds Richard laying the foundations for his own house. This is a movie made with a sense of integrity, unspectacular but homey enough – though it's hard to imagine it weathering the long years ahead. S

Inseparable: Ruth Negga, Joel Edgerton

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Ged Doherty
Colin Firth
Nancy Buirski
Sarah Green
Marc Turtletaub
Peter Saraf
Written by
Jeff Nichols
Based in part on the documentary *The Loving Story* [2011] by Nancy Buirski

Director of Photography
Adam Stone
Edited by
Julie Monroe
Production Designer
Chad Keith
Music
David Wingo
Supervising Sound Editor
Will Files
Costume Designer
Erin Benach

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Production Companies
A Focus Features presentation of a Raindog Films/Big Beach production in association with Augusta Films & Tri-State Pictures
Executive Producers
Brian Kavanaugh-Jones
Jack Turner
Jared Ian Goldman

Cast

Joel Edgerton
Richard Loving
Ruth Negga
Mildred Loving
Marton Csokas
Sheriff Brooks
Nick Kroll
Bernard Cohen, 'Bernie'
Terri Abney
Garnet Jeter
Alano Miller
Raymond Green
Jon Bass
Phil Hirschkop
Michael Shannon
Grey Villet

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures International UK & Eire

Rural Virginia, 1958. One night, Mildred Jeter, who is black, announces to her boyfriend Richard Loving, who is white, that she is pregnant with his child. He receives the news happily, and soon afterwards they travel to Washington DC to be married. However, when they return home to live together as husband and wife, they are violating Virginia's anti-miscegenation laws. They are soon arrested, and forced by the court to leave their home under threat of being sent to jail. They move to Washington, where Mildred makes contact with attorney Bernard Cohen, who sees the Lovings' case as having the potential to go to the Supreme Court, where all such anti-miscegenation laws might be ruled unconstitutional. His crusade moves slowly, and after one of the Lovings' three children is clipped by a car, the family resolve to move back to the remote Virginia countryside. Finally, with the aid of another attorney, Phil Hirschkop, Cohen challenges Virginia's anti-miscegenation laws in court, simultaneously making moves to publicise the Lovings' case, a situation with which the shy and soft-spoken Richard is uncomfortable. The Supreme Court agrees to hear the case, but the Lovings themselves remain in Virginia during the hearing, which ends with the striking down of race-based legal restrictions on marriage across the US. His marriage to Mildred recognised, Richard sets about building a house for her on the plot of land that he purchased a long time ago.

Manchester by the Sea

USA 2016
Director: Kenneth Lonergan
Certificate 15 137m 22s

See Feature on page 48

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Guy walks into a bar. Bartender asks, "You watch the game?" Guy says, "Yeah, I did." "You think they got a shot?" "No. Not at all. They dropped the first two, they're gonna lose the next three."

The guy at the bar with faraway eyes is Lee Chandler (Casey Affleck), who'll bust up the joint by the end of the night, one of the spasmodic episodes of violence that interrupt the overall tone of steadily trudging depression hanging over Kenneth Lonergan's *Manchester by the Sea*, a piece of work so wholly untouched by the cult of specious optimism that it doesn't seem for a moment to belong to the 'It Gets Better' universe of the American Sundance indie. It is, nevertheless, a thoroughly American movie in its regional dialect and its imagery – the recurring 'pillow shots' of the harbour off Cape Ann owe less to Ozu than to the 19th-century views of Gloucester by Fitz Henry Lane, or perhaps Melville's "damp, drizzly November in my soul" (though Lonergan's film feels like the dead of January). It belongs to that dangerous, broody America where death was always a-lurking – that is to say, the same one that's around today, though it doesn't often like to admit itself as such.

Rudderless Lee has had his cup of sorrow filled three times and running over. He is a foundered man compelled to return to the hometown where he ran aground, drawn back by a fresh family tragedy – the entirely anticipated death of his older brother due to a pre-existing condition, leaving behind a teenage son who legally needs looking after – to revisit the scene of another tragedy from years ago, a fatal fire that still smoulders in his mind. Affleck's performance deserves all the plaudits it's gotten – the glassiness that only snaps into focus in moments of peevishness and rage, the vestiges of ball-busting humour that he still keeps up, as though through muscle memory. He has the loneliest walk you'll ever see.

This shit-magnet man locked into the tunnel vision of despair is at the centre of *Manchester by the Sea*, but the film's perspective doesn't conform to his monomania. Lonergan takes the trouble to show us how interesting everyone around Lee is as well, and in this the director resembles Mike Leigh at his best. From the film's opening, when we watch Lee interacting with the residents of the apartment complexes where he acts as janitor, you have a sense of life going on around him, regardless of, and indifferent to, his insuperable sadness. There isn't a single roughed-in sketch in the cast. Appearing only in the flashbacks that criss-cross the narrative, Kyle Chandler plays the older brother, Joe – a bluff, hearty guy whose absence leaves a real hole in the movie. Michelle Williams plays Lee's wife, seen both during and after the dissolve of their marriage, and in her final scene, when they are again alone together, she seems really taken by surprise by the violence of her seizure-like emotional disgorging. Even Matthew Broderick, who appeared in Lonergan's directorial debut *You Can Count on Me* (2000), shows up in a late cameo that might not be worth the risk of distraction were it not for the fact that it brings the movie exactly the right depth-charge blast of quiet suburban

Land of no hope: Casey Affleck, Lucas Hedges

desperation. And then there's the real discovery, young Lucas Hedges, as Joe's boy Patrick, who handles his father's death with the equanimity of a kid who's been practising for this moment, a lanky playboy-in-the-making who for now is reliant on his uncle to drive him between his hook-ups and band rehearsals – very funny scenes in a movie that has more laughs than a work so emotionally punishing has a right to.

The past is eternally present for Lee not only in *Manchester by the Sea*'s flashbacks but in the tossed-off dialogue. Watching a second time with full knowledge of Lee's history, seemingly aimless patter reveals itself to be laced with scourging reminders of his shame – that bit on "losing the next three", for instance, or a tenant prattling about a granddaughter's bat mitzvah ("Oh, well, the little girls are charming"). This isn't writerly flourish; these are exactly the little cracks that sorrow finds a way to seep through, as true to the experience of endless mourning as the jagged crusts of snow by the cleared sidewalks are to New England weather, or as the way characters talk of the sea is to the life of the coastal New Englander. The movie ends where it began, on the water, but it's no chin-up maritime metaphor – even a no-hoper can't help having some days that are better than others.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Matt Damon
Kimberly Steward
Chris Moore
Lauren Beck
Kevin J. Walsh
Written by
Kenneth Lonergan
Director of Photography
Jody Lee Lipes
Editor
Jennifer Lame
Production Designer
Ruth De Jong
Music
Lesley Barber
Sound Mixer
Kevin Parker
Costume Designer
Melissa Toth

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Production Companies
Amazon presents in association with K Period Media Pearl Street Films, The Media Farm, K Period Media, The A | Middleton Project, B Story production
A picture by Kenneth Lonergan
Produced in association with Big Indie Pictures
Executive Producers
Josh Godfrey
John Krasinski
Declan Baldwin
Bill Migliore

Cast

Casey Affleck
Lee Chandler
Michelle Williams
Randi Chandler
Kyle Chandler
Joe Chandler
Lucas Hedges
Patrick Chandler
C.J. Wilson
George
Heather Burns
Jill
Tate Donovan
hockey coach
Josh Hamilton
Wes, Joe's lawyer
Anna Baryshnikov
Sandy
Matthew Broderick
Jeffrey
Gretchen Mol
Elise

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

Boston, Massachusetts, present day. Lee Chandler, a maintenance man working at an apartment building, goes about his daily rounds, followed by an evening of blackout drinking and an unmotivated, self-destructive fistfight. Hearing that his older brother Joe has died from a congenital heart condition, Lee heads upstate to his hometown, Manchester-by-the-Sea, where he breaks the news to Joe's teen son Patrick, whom Joe was raising by himself. Staying on to take care of Joe's affairs, Lee learns that his brother had made provisions in his will for him to remain in town as Patrick's guardian. Lee bridles at the prospect of taking on this responsibility, insisting that Patrick must come back to Boston with him.

Flashbacks reveal that some years earlier, Lee lost his three young children in a house fire started through his own drunken negligence, an incident that precipitated the end of his marriage and his banishment from his hometown.

Lee reconnects with his ex-wife Randi, who is now remarried, and Patrick gets in touch with his estranged mother, banished for her drinking, but neither reunion brings any resolution or solution. Finally, Lee arranges for some old family friends to take Patrick into their home, extending the boy an open invitation to visit him in Boston. Lee and Patrick take the family fishing boat out on the water for old times' sake.

Moana

USA 2016
Directors: John Musker, Ron Clements
Certificate PG 113m 27s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

Moana is an animated film of the subgenre codified at the start of the 'Disney Renaissance' by 1989's *The Little Mermaid*. Both films are co-directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, and start from the same premise: a young woman next in line to be queen/chief chafes at the for-safety's-sake boundaries imposed on her. Instead of being urged to stay under the sea, Polynesian Moana (voiced by Auli'l Cravalho) is supposed to stay far from it: her father Tui (Temuera Morrison) insists his people don't venture past the coral reef. It's as inevitable as her journey of self-discovery and vindication that, in between musical numbers, Moana will have reason to leave and prove herself. In this case, a complicated piece of mythology requires her to find the trickster demigod Maui (Dwayne Johnson) and have him restore the stone heart of goddess Te Fiti to prevent the destruction of her island.

During the production period, Musker and Clements focused on the animation, while co-directors Don Hall and Chris Williams concentrated on the story. *Moana*'s attention to the details of Polynesian culture, costume and mythology is a far cry from Clements and Musker's effectively racist *Aladdin* (1992); an extensive research period, which included ongoing input from scholars and anthropologists among others, gives the film some credibility. (Not all viewers have been pleased, though – some have taken offence at, for example, Maui's sheer bulk, seeing it as perpetuating the stereotype of Polynesian obesity.) Moana has no romantic interest at any point, and one dismissive line from Maui when he doubts her abilities as a sailor and tactician – "If you have a dress and an animal sidekick, you're a princess" – is self-reflexive winking from Disney as it steps away from that particular retrograde formula. All of the primary voice cast are of Polynesian or New Zealand descent, and no other conspicuous errors of appropriation have been made.

Disney does not cheap out on its big-event animation films, and *Moana* looks like its $150m. The major achievement here is the water: 16 years after the publicity materials for *The Perfect Storm* rather pathetically and unconvincingly claimed that CG had finally mastered this element, the liquid is fully realised. Whether limpidly blue and transparent or grey and stormy, it's totally believable – so much so that at odd moments it can appear as if CG characters are standing in front of a water tank filled with the real thing. Moana is, per her grandmother's words, "chosen by the ocean" – specifically by a water tentacle that seems modelled on 1989's *The Abyss*, a sequence with twinkling pinks and purples on the bottom of the ocean floor, as in the climax of that film, seems to confirm the debt, though maybe it's just that Musker and Clements care as much about the science of depicting oceans properly as James Cameron once did. The realisation of Moana's hair – completed strand by strand – and the grains of sand that at one point stick to her face are also formidable technical achievements.

The English-language songs are by Broadway's Lin-Manuel Miranda, whose reputation outside the US was recently enhanced when vice-president-elect Mike Pence was booed at a performance of his *Hamilton*. (There are also songs here by Opetaia Foa'i in the Tokelauan language, appearing both as background elements in Miranda's songs and standalone tracks.) The lyrics can be quite clever: a crab voiced by Jemaine Clement declares, "You can't expect a demigod to beat a decapod." But no matter who wrote the songs, there was always going to be a line about listening to your 'inner voice' – it's pretty much Disney company policy. And there will be always be enervating dialogue about believing in yourself, or about how "sometimes our strengths lie below the surface", or a variant on (Moana to the demigod) "The gods aren't the ones that make you Maui. You are."

All of these affirmational bromides are a regrettable staple of the late Disney corpus, and while they coincide nicely with the recent boom in self-proclaimed 'empowerment ballads', they do little to actually raise the spirits. This tiresome pablum is admittedly mostly frontloaded; the back half is a march from one big face-off to another, mediated by bonding between Maui and Moana. Disney addicts (they exist!) will be satisfied, and the film is, overall, harmless. But for all the technical skill on display, this feels as inessential and disposable as any *Shrek* or *Ice Age*, only with ostensibly loftier pretensions.

Poetry in ocean: *Moana*

Credits and Synopsis

Co-directed by
Chris Williams
Don Hall
Produced by
Osnat Shurer
Screenplay
Jared Bush
Story
Ron Clements
John Musker
Chris Williams
Don Hall
Pamela Ribon
Aaron Kandell
Jordan Kandell
Directors of Cinematography
Layout:
Rob Dressel
Lighting:
Adolph Lusinsky
Edited by
Jeff Draheim
Production Designer
Ian Gooding
Original Songs
Lin-Manuel Miranda
Opetaia Foa'i
Mark Mancina
Original Score Composed by
Mark Mancina
Sound Designer & Supervising Sound Editor
Tim Nielsen

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Executive Producer
John Lasseter

Voice Cast

Auli'i Cravalho
Moana
Dwayne Johnson
Maui
Rachel House
Gramma Tala
Temuera Morrison
Chief Tui
Jemaine Clement
Tamatoa
Nicole Scherzinger
Sina
Alan Tudyk
Heihei, villager 3
Oscar Kightley
fisherman
Troy Polamalu
villager 1
Puanani Cravalho
villager 2
Louise Bush
Moana as toddler

Dolby Atmos
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Buena Vista International (UK)

Running time (113m 27s) includes short film 'Inner Workings' (6m 25s).

Motunui, Polynesia, the pre-modern past. Moana is destined to succeed her father Tui as chief of their island. His community never sails past the coral reef, but Moana longs to explore further. When the island's fish disappear and the coconuts spoil, Moana believes it's because of the demigod Maui, who long ago stole the stone heart of island goddess Te Fiti, causing destruction to spread. Moana's grandmother takes her to a cave, where she learns that her community used to be seafaring voyagers. As Moana's grandmother is dying, she urges Moana to sail away, find Maui and force him to return the heart to Te Fiti. With the ocean's help, Moana finds Maui on a remote deserted island, where he's been stranded for 1,000 years. He tries to steal Moana's boat and abandon her, but the sea resists him. They are attacked by pirates, who try to steal the heart, but they manage to escape. Maui and Moana agree that first they will retrieve his magical hook, which allows him to become a shapeshifter, and then restore the heart. The hook is in the possession of Tamatoa, a gigantic crab. After retrieving the hook, they set sail to return the heart to Te Fiti. They fight lava god Te Ka and are initially defeated, but Moana restores the heart to Te Ka, who reverts to her benevolent form as Te Fiti. Moana returns to her home, which is fertile once more, and convinces her community to become voyagers again.

Molly Moon and the Incredible Book of Hypnotism

United Kingdom/USA 2014
Director: Christopher N. Rowley
Certificate U 97m 31s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Despite the Harry Potterish vibe emanating from its supernatural subject and its reworked title (the original novel is *Molly Moon's Incredible Book of Hypnotism*), this tale of an orphaned girl's powers awakened by a legendary tome is far from magical on screen.

Adapted from the first of Georgia Byng's stories about a plucky tween, the film feels like a mash-up, taking inspiration from a mixture of proven properties and genres to maximise its appeal. There's a Roald Dahl tone to the opening plot, in which Molly's hardscrabble orphanage is peopled by child-hating grotesques. Rather like Matilda, Molly is picked on, finds sanctuary in the local library, is comforted by a kind teacher and revenges herself with her newly discovered powers. But the film's first-rate cast are stuck with functional characterisation and dialogue, so both Lesley Manville's villainous headmistress Miss Adderstone and Celia Imrie's slovenly cook Edna ham up their scenes incessantly in order to make an impact. Among the adults, only Emily Watson's devoted teacher Mrs Trinklebury is played in anything like a normal register. Fortunately, Raffey Cassidy has a natural, unaffected acting style and manages Molly's transitions from rebel to showbiz brat to chastened criminal sidekick gracefully

Lacking wit, the film's humour is chiefly old-school slapstick, introduced by bumbling thief Nockman (a put-upon Dominic Monaghan), who is prone to falling off ladders and being savaged by Molly's dog Petula, *101 Dalmatians*-style. He disappears periodically throughout the film's episodic narrative, which director/co-writer Christopher N. Rowley sends cantering through a succession of genres. This gives rise to a dispiriting tonal inconsistency, moving from tense jeopardy when Miss Adderstone engineers a serious accident for whistleblowing Mrs Trinklebury to spangly satirised musical numbers in the film's middle section and a comic crime caper in the last act.

Hypnotism turns out to be rather samey as a magical power, as we see a procession of

Book of wonders: Raffey Cassidy

saucer-eyed adults falling over themselves to do Molly's bidding. However, it allows the plot to deliver unsubtle moral lessons for its child audience. Molly's hypnosis-driven attempt to become a singing star, which she eventually recognises as fraud rather than fun, is a thumping cautionary tale. The film also draws clumsy if well-intentioned parallels between the business of marketing to children (Molly's rival tween sensation Davina shills for a vile soft drink called Qube) and Molly's hypnotic talents with TV audiences.

The musical numbers are distinctly lacklustre, made more so by having to switch between the audience's perception of 'talented' Molly and the talent-free reality of her off-key warbling and hoofing. One wonders why her show performance couldn't have been enjoyably game but merely competent, in the style of the *Nativity* movies? Or hilariously inept, as in the TV adaptation of David Walliams's *Gangsta Granny*. The film's settings, and Remi Adefarasin's cinematography, have a TV-movie feel attributable to the modest budget, but it's amplified by the frequently articulated *Tracy Beaker*-style lessons about 'making your own family'. Molly forgives even Nockman's villainy, since he is the victim of bad parenting by Joan Collins's contemptuous criminal mother. A leather-clad Collins, glowering camply through her few scenes and kissing her sidekick Gary Kemp with relish, is the film's undoubted guilty pleasure.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Ileen Maisel
Lawrence Elman
Georgia Byng
Simon Bosanquet
Screenplay
Georgia Byng
Christopher N. Rowley
Tom Butterworth
Chris Hurford
Additional Material
Simon Bosanquet
Based on the novel *Molly Moon's Incredible Book of Hypnotism* by Georgia Byng
Director of Photography
Remi Adefarasin
Editor
Lesley Walker
Production Designer
John Beard
Music
Peter Raeburn
Sound Recordist
Jim Greenhorn
Costume Designer
Ruth Myers

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Production Companies
Amber Entertainment presents a Molly Moon Films production in association with Drop of Water Productions
Executive Producers
Shezi Nackvi
Philip Alberstat
Norman Merry
Peter Hampden

Cast
Dominic Monaghan
Nockman
Lesley Manville
Miss Adderstone
Emily Watson
Mrs Trinklebury
Celia Imrie
Edna, cook
Anne-Marie Duff
Lucy Logan, librarian
Ben Miller
Mr Alabaster
Sadie Frost
Mrs Alabaster
Omid Djalili
Barry Rix
Gary Kemp
Gregg
Tom Wisdom
Charlie Cooper
Jadon Carnelly-Morris
Rocky
Joan Collins
Tracey Nockman
Raffey Cassidy
Molly Moon

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

England, present day. Unhappy orphan Molly Moon steals a hypnotism book from the library. Would-be thief Nockman, needing the book for a jewel robbery, tracks her down. Cruel headmistress Miss Adderstone causes kind teacher Mrs Trinklebury to have a terrible accident. Molly hypnotises Miss Adderstone into being nice. Molly's best friend Rocky gets himself adopted by a rich London couple when Molly fails him. Molly runs away to find him, but he refuses to leave his new family. Molly hypnotises stage director Barry so that tween stage star Davina will be sacked. Molly takes over Davina's show. She hypnotises audiences into thinking that she is a great performer, but eventually realises that her success is a fraud. Rocky leaves his adoptive family, who want to send him to boarding school, and reunites with Molly. Nockman kidnaps Molly and uses her hypnotism powers to steal a crime gang's haul of priceless jewels. Rocky secretly follows them. Nockman's mother double-crosses him. Rocky helps Molly and Nockman trap his mother, using Molly's hypnosis skills. They leave the crooks and jewels in Trafalgar Square for the police to find. Molly and Rocky return to the orphanage and ask the recovered Mrs Trinklebury to look after them all.

A Monster Calls

Spain/USA 2016
Director: J.A. Bayona
Certificate 12A 108m 13s

See Feature on page 54

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Patrick Ness's children's novel *A Monster Calls* (2011) is billed as being "from an original idea by Siobhan Dowd", who died of breast cancer after conceiving the premise of the book, about a young protagonist's troubles coping with his mother's terminal illness. Ness tactfully expands the scope of the story in his screenplay for J.A. Bayona's film, which takes many visual cues from Jim Kay's illustrations for the book, especially in the gnarly look of the Liam Neeson-voiced night-time visitor, who always shows up at 12.07, for reasons only revealed in the powerful finale. This monster is a creaking humanoid yew tree given to inflicting casual destruction with swipes of its vast limbs, and prone to telling tales with unhappy endings or confusing morals. Its look evokes the less threatening Groot of *Guardians of the Galaxy* but its cultural roots go deeper than Marvel Comics, to the Green Man of British lore and legend.

Bayona's best-known previous films are the Spanish ghost story *The Orphanage* (2007) and the true-life disaster/family drama *The Impossible* (2012) – both of which resonate with the current work. Young Conor's nightmare of being separated from his mother by an earthquake that brings down the church in their picturesque village and creates a chasm in the graveyard is a gothicised take on the family sundered by a tsunami in *The Impossible*, while supernatural manifestations proffering a threat that masks reassurance echo *The Orphanage*. The earlier films told the stories of fiercely protective parents or surrogate parents, but *A Monster Calls* turns things around – just as Conor pays back the monster's uncomfortable parables with a revelation of his own. Here, Bayona adopts the viewpoint of a child who struggles with stories that have unhappy or troubling resolutions.

Though Conor (Lewis MacDougall, carrying the film) openly resents both his strict grandmother (Sigourney Weaver) and lax father (Toby Kebbell), he is unable to admit even to himself that he is furious with his dying mother. When he tells the monster that his secret wish is for the suffering to be over, he means his own – not hers. This uncomfortable truth is foreshadowed by cartoon-animated tales of cruelty and undeserved punishment in a fairytale kingdom or the industrial revolution. So conflicted is Conor that he violently lashes out to invite a punishment that the adults can't bring themselves to inflict on the son of a dying woman. In a perfectly judged finale, the death of the mother – the sentence Conor has to say isn't "I love you" but "I don't want you to go" – is followed by an entry into the world of childhood dreams and creative urges that she has passed on to him, along with the monster.

Just as Dowd's idea nestles in the heart of Ness's book and script, the final reveal of *A Monster Calls* – and its most affecting stroke – is this realisation that Conor's imagination has been shaped and cultivated by his mother (a selfless Felicity Jones performance), who once thought of going to art school but instead had a baby. Early on, mother and son share a viewing of *King Kong*, using her late father's projector (Neeson is glimpsed in family photographs), establishing a

The tree of knowledge: Lewis MacDougall, Felicity Jones

shared sympathy for the persecuted great ape. When Conor is finally given the key to his mother's bedroom – an eerily, affectingly silent sequence that most Spielbergian filmmakers would strangle with music – things from her childhood (including a Frankenstein Monster model and Kong sketches) indicate that *she* was the monster-loving child who saw a yew tree on the hill as the giant who later visits her son.

Cinema isn't short of troubled children with fantastical friends, and this shares DNA with Hollywood takes on British books such as *The Iron Giant* and *The BFG*. However, Bayona's tone is more in tune with Spanish work like Victor Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973), which might be behind that Frankenstein Monster reference, or Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), which owes a debt to a little-noticed Japanese monster movie, Honda Ishiro's *Godzilla's Revenge* (1969), whose influence also feeds into the present film. *A Monster Calls* draws too on Val Lewton and Robert Wise's *The Curse of the Cat People* (1944), a pioneer in this arena. As a chilly, agonised older woman perceived as a monster, Weaver even bears a resemblance to Elizabeth Russell, who essayed variations on this type in Lewton's films. As in *The Curse of the Cat People*, this seeming witch figure is treated as a villain but revealed to be a tragic sufferer whose final act of mercy and love allows a child to accept a magical inheritance from a departed mother.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Belén Atienza
Screenplay
Patrick Ness
Based upon the novel written by Patrick Ness
From an original idea by Siobhan Dowd
Director of Photography
Óscar Faura
Editors
Bernat Vilaplana
Jaume Martí
Production Designer
Eugenio Caballero
Music
Fernando Velázquez
Sound Designer
Oriol Tarragó
Costume Designer
Steven Noble
Visual Effects
El Ranchito
MPC
Glassworks Barcelona
Miopia
Lamppost
Minimo VFX

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Production Companies
Focus Features presents in association with Participant Media/River Road Entertainment an Apaches Entertainment-Telecinco Cinema-A Monster Calls, AIE-La Trin production
With the support of ICAA - ICEC
Executive Producers
Patrick Ness
Bill Pohlard
Jeff Skoll
Mitch Horwits
Jonathan King
Patrick Wachsberger
Enrique López-Lavigne
Ghislain Barrois
Álvaro Augustin
Film Extracts
King Kong (1933)

Cast

Sigourney Weaver
Grandma
Felicity Jones
Mum
Toby Kebbell
Dad
Lewis MacDougall
Conor O'Malley
Liam Neeson
voice of the monster
Ben Moor
Mr Clark
James Melville
Harry
Oliver Steer
Sully
Dominic Boyle
Anton
Jennifer Lim
Miss Kwan
Max Gabbay
Steven
Joe Curtis
Peter
Morgan Symes
lawyer
Max Golds
Conor aged 5
Frida Palsson
Lily's mum
Wanda Opalinska
female nurse
Patrick Taggart
teacher
Lily Rose Aslandogdu
Lily
Geraldine Chaplin
head teacher

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
E1 Films

Spanish theatrical title
Un monstruo viene a verme

Contemporary rural England. Thirteen-year-old Conor lives with his ailing, divorced mother. In his recurring nightmare, he is unable to save his mother from an earthquake. A yew tree visible from his bedroom window seems to come to life as a giant monster that visits him nightly – promising to tell him three stories, which will prompt Conor to tell one of his own. His mother's treatment does not go well. His father, who lives in California, visits – but says Conor won't be able to live with him and his new family. While his mother is in hospital, Conor has to stay with his strict grandmother. Inspired by the monster's stories and perhaps under its influence, Conor destroys his grandmother's living room and batters a school bully. Conor admits to the monster that his dream ends not with his failure to save his mother but his deliberately letting her die. Ashamed that he wants her to die to end the ordeal of her suffering, he has acted monstrously in the hope of being punished. Conor is at his mother's bedside when she dies. Later, he moves into her childhood room at his grandmother's house and finds drawings that suggest she first imagined the monster who has helped her son come to terms with her death.

Monster Trucks

Director: Chris Wedge
Certificate PG 104m 34s

Reviewed by Anna Smith

"Did that just happen?" asks astonished schoolgirl Meredith (Jane Levy) at one point in *Monster Trucks*, and it's a phrase that may well resonate with audiences. It's hard to imagine a more puzzling and overwrought premise for a family film: a previously unknown aquatic creature escapes into small-town America and, with the help of a teenage mechanic, uses its tentacles to power a modified truck, hoping to return to its home deep underground.

Said mechanic, Tripp (Lucas Till), takes it all in his stride, and proceeds to ride around town impressing the girls with his new monster truck, as well as unleashing some of his fury at his absent father and his mom's patronising new boyfriend (Barry Pepper), who happens to be the sheriff. There's an attempt at an eco message too – as in films such as *ET* and *Pete's Dragon*, this creature belongs in the wild, away from prying authorities – but it's ironically undermined by the film's reverence for the gas-guzzling beasts that power Middle America. The phrase 'monster truck' is used in the US to denote a customised, superpowered vehicle: this long-delayed release perhaps seeks to cash in on the trend by creating its own hybrid, welding action comedy with creature-feature to bizarre effect. *Ice Age* and *Robots* director Chris Wedge should be on familiar ground, but his first live action/animation blend has mixed results.

The key CG creature, which Tripp inventively nicknames 'Creech', has the big eyes and friendly disposition you'd expect from any boy-meets-animal story, but its characterisation and communication are limited, since it's squeezed into the body of Tripp's truck, apparently cheerfully enslaved. The onus is on the humans to entertain, which they do occasionally: Levy has charm as the smitten, swotty Meredith, who can take Tripp down a

The life aquatic: Lucas Till

peg or two, though her attempts to question his casual sexism – asking why he assumes the creature is a 'he' – are token in a story that ultimately implies male creatures are blue and females pink. (There is also a purple option outside the family unit – bisexual perhaps?)

While Rob Lowe brings a camp, arch tone to the creepy oil company boss, Till is no comedy actor, and it's generally hard to tell quite how funny *Monster Trucks* is supposed to be, either in its wildly absurd premise, its harnessing of 1980s family-movie clichés or its surreal dialogue. A climactic chase sees Tripp, at the wheel of the creature-powered truck, declare that he will attempt a difficult jump. "It's 99 per cent impossible," he says. "Maybe even 100 per cent." "You be careful, son," advises the sheriff.

Monster Trucks isn't a terrible film, but it has little going for it beyond bursts of comedy (intentional or otherwise) and souped-up vehicles. The main fascination lies in trying to work out how, and why, anyone conceived the idea for this film in the first place. S

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Mary Parent
Denis L. Stewart
Screenplay
Derek Connolly
Story
Matthew Robinson
Jonathan Aibel
Glenn Berger
Director of Photography
Don Burgess
Edited by
Conrad Buff
Production Designer
Andrew Menzies
Music
David Sardy
Production Sound Mixer
Darren Brisker
Costume Designer
Tish Monaghan

Production Companies
Paramount Pictures presents a Disruption Entertainment production
A Chris Wedge film
Executive Producers
Cale Boyter
Jonathan Aibel
Glenn Berger

Cast
Lucas Till
Tripp
Jane Levy
Meredith
Thomas Lennon
Dr Bill Dowd
Holt McCallany
Burke
Barry Pepper
Tucker Albrizzi
Danny Glover
Amy Ryan
Rob Lowe
Frank Whaley

Dolby Atmos
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Paramount Pictures UK

North Dakota, the present. While drilling, an oil company discovers two large squid-like creatures, which it keeps secretly in a lab. Another of the creatures escapes to the workshop of schoolboy and part-time mechanic Tripp, who reports it to the police, only for it to disappear. It reappears, and Tripp wins its trust. He discovers that it enjoys the taste of oil. When men from the oil company come looking, the creature hides in a truck that Tripp has been converting and uses its tentacles to propel the wheels. Schoolmate Meredith seeks Tripp out to work on a project, and the two flee the oil company's heavies in the monster-propelled truck. Meredith helps Tripp hide the creature in her father's garage, where Tripp uses tools to modify the truck so that it works along with the creature. Oil company scientist Dr Dowd discovers that the captive creatures have a hive memory. Tripp seeks the advice of his estranged father, who works at the oil company, but the latter reports him to the boss. Looking to set the creatures free, Tripp and Meredith customise two more trucks. They break into the oil company and – with the help of Dowd – free the creatures, escaping in the customised trucks. A cliffside chase follows. Tripp releases the creatures back into the watery hole they came from, where they are reunited with many others of their kind. The oil company is forced to abandon drilling when protected lizards – planted, it seems, by Tripp and Meredith – are discovered on the property.

Office Christmas Party

USA/India 2016
Director: Will Speck, Josh Gordon
Certificate 15 105m 8s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

In a post-*Hangover* comedic landscape, movies promise us bacchanalian revels not just for the prospect of onscreen naughtiness but also on the understanding that the escalating chaos will leave our white-bread protagonists well out of their usual comfort zone. The twist, such as it is, in this instance, is that the revelry unfolds in the workplace itself, since the company's festive blowout offers usually staid colleagues opportunities for misbehaviour, embarrassment, self-revelation and so forth.

It's a set-up with evident comic possibilities, and here the six-strong team credited with story and screenplay at least make an effort to create an ensemble of recognisable workplace types whose true mettle will be revealed when the party gets into full swing. Not that there's much originality across the board, since the characters – Kate McKinnon's uptight human resources manager, Karan Soni's Asian geek with a pretend girlfriend, Rob Corddry's mouthy but essentially harmless would-be rebel, African-American Sam Richardson's broad turn as the hapless co-worker who turns amped-up DJ for the occasion – offer standard-issue clichés all round. With a few discreet couplings, some photocopied genitals and a bag of stray coke in the snow machine about as wild as it gets, the party proceedings also lack the commercially *de rigueur* gross-out set piece, ultimately proving somewhat tangential to an overarching, truly tedious central plot strand involving the company's financial straits and its development of a new wireless internet technology.

Casting Olivia Munn as the rock-loving woman behind this groundbreaking new server is a far from convincing attempt to make coding sexy; in fact she plays second fiddle to top-billed Jason Bateman, who's his usual affable self as the company's safety-first tech chief, though given very little to do – the lowlight being one humiliating encounter with a cherubic ice

Agile working: Jennifer Aniston, T.J. Miller

statue dispensing eggnog through an extended phallic output pipe. Given that he's now turned to directing himself, it may be that Bateman is tiring of such unexceptional box-office chores (see also *Horrible Bosses*, *Identity Thief*, *The Change-Up* and so forth... it's a long list), which essentially waste the services of a performer who on the right day – *Arrested Development*, *Juno* – makes an effortlessly likeable and effective light comedian.

Expectations soon ebb away here, however, even if Jennifer Aniston is good value as the witch-queen CEO who treats all and sundry with undisguised scorn and has martial-arts skills to match. The movie plods away through an elaborately set up corporate-redemption narrative, which then takes almost as much time to resolve. In the end, we even leave the eponymous works do behind, so that T.J. Miller's madcap boss can have a go at a long-signposted and utterly arbitrary attempt to drive his car over central Chicago's Clark Street raised drawbridge. A pointless diversion that proves but a minor blip on the way to a cheering affirmation of capitalist endeavour, increased profit margins and a happy workforce. Laughter, though, doesn't figure terribly much in the film's equation. S

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Scott Stuber
Guymon Casaday
Daniel Rappaport
Screenplay
Justin Malen
Laura Solon
Dan Mazer
Story
Jon Lucas
Scott Moore
Timothy Dowling
Director of Photography
Jeff Cutter
Editors
Jeff Groth
Evan Henke
Production Designer
Andrew Laws
Music
Theodore Shapiro
Production Sound Mixer
Steve C. Aaron
Costume Designer
Karen Patch
Stunt Co-ordinator
Lance Gilbert

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Production Companies
Dreamworks Pictures and Reliance Entertainment present a Bluegrass Films/Entertainment 360 production
A Speck/Gordon film
Executive Producer
Josh Gordon
Will Speck
Beau Bauman
Richard Vane
Matthew Hirsch

Cast
Jason Bateman
Josh Parker
Olivia Munn
Tracey Hughes
T.J. Miller
Clay Vanstone
Jillian Bell
Trina
Vanessa Bayer
Allison
Courtney B. Vance
Walter Davis
Rob Corddry
Jeremy
Kate McKinnon
Mary
Jennifer Aniston
Carol Vanstone
Abbey Lee
Savannah
Sam Richardson
Joel
Jamie Chung
Meghan
Randall Park
Fred
Oliver Cooper
Drew
Andrew Leeds
Tim
Da'Vine Joy Randolph
Carla
Karan Soni
Nate
Matt Walsh
Ezra

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
E1 Films

Chicago, present day. Staff morale is low at IT firm Zenotek, as cautious chief technical officer Josh and devil-may-care chief executive Clay (son of the company founder) ponder another set of poor financial results, though Josh's colleague Tracey is perfecting an exciting new technology using existing power lines to create wireless internet access everywhere. Carol, the operation's interim CEO and Clay's half-sister, still bitter that he was their father's favourite, announces a brutal cost-cutting programme, banning bonuses and cancelling the office Christmas party. Josh and Clay argue that if they can win the lucrative DataCity account, their financial woes will be over, so they instigate a huge Christmas party to impress DataCity's executive Walter. The revels soon get out of hand, however, resulting in serious injury to Walter and putting Clay in the clutches of vicious female pimp Trina. He's determined to prove his mettle by launching his car over the raised Clark Street drawbridge, but is persuaded against it by Josh, Tracey and Carol in another speeding vehicle. Both cars careen out of control. Clay is hospitalised; Josh's vehicle hits a communications hub, wiping out Chicago's internet coverage. Tracey puts her wireless network into action; its effectiveness promises a profitable future for the company. Carol and Clay bury their differences.

Passengers

USA/Hong Kong 2016
Director: Morten Tyldum
Certificate 12A 116m 0s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

The disaster-in-space science-fiction subgenre seems to be venturing progressively further afield, from the Earth-orbit peril of *Gravity* (2013) via the interplanetary castaway of *The Martian* (2015) to this exercise in interstellar vehicle maintenance. In this cycle, systems full of failsafes and redundancies are undone by unforeseen circumstances while plucky, science-literate survivors improvise ways around features designed for safety (active threats after unplanned-for mishaps) and devise *MacGyver*-like solutions to complicated problems. In the current spirit of not trusting experts, all these films feature smart, resourceful people who *aren't* specialists in spacecraft design or operation, but amateurs from other disciplines – medical engineer Ryan Stone (Sandra Bullock) in *Gravity*, botanist Mark Watney (Matt Damon) in *The Martian*, and now Jim Preston (Chris Pratt) in *Passengers* – a fix-it man who can read a manual properly and throw together ways out of seemingly certain dooms by repurposing whatever comes to hand.

Late in the day, *Passengers* wakes up someone who knows what to do when the starship Avalon is in danger of becoming the deep-space Titanic – and, more importantly, has access to areas of the ship prohibited to mere passengers – but Laurence Fishburne's gruff crewman is aboard literally just to cough up exposition before expiring to leave twinkling stars Pratt and Jennifer Lawrence to cope with a meteor-breached fusion reactor by themselves. The science-fiction setting, screen-filling star presences and well-staged extra-vehicular activity more or less sell the climax – but it's still a major ask to accept that, say, the Chernobyl disaster could have been averted by a garage mechanic and a *Guardian* columnist, skimming ring-binder instructions and using a ripped-off car door as a radiation shield. Among screenwriter Jon Spaihts's other credits is *Prometheus* (2012): a design similarity between the cryopods of the Avalon and those of the *Alien* series and the reappearance from *Prometheus* of a key item of medical kit used as a get-out-of-death-free card hint that this could take place in the same universe, though the quadrillion-dollar-reaping company behind the voyage of the Avalon is arrogantly inept rather than actively malign.

Morten Tyldum, stepping up in the budget stakes after *The Imitation Game* (2014), still seems drawn to subjects that offer potential for impressive set pieces – here, there's a great bit of sci-fi terror as a sudden loss of ship's gravity puts Aurora in danger of drowning inside a spherical glob of water which moments before was a swimming pool with a spectacular starscape view – but refuse to hang together. Though based on fact, *The Imitation Game* was studded with 'oh come on now' unlikelinesses – and venturing into space just means that Tyldum isn't even ashamed of the Michael Sheen-faced robot bartender who lets slip the one fact he's been explicitly told not to at the moment when a second-act crisis ('boy loses girl') is required. After a feint in which the lonely spaceman seeks solace by anthropomorphising scuttling cleaning robots (reminiscent of the *Silent Running* droids) or the Lloyd-from-*The Shining* half-Sheen, Jim gets hung up on one sleeping

Light sleepers: Chris Pratt, Jennifer Lawrence

beauty out of 5,000 passengers by looking at her video diary, without even glancing at any of the others – or considering whether it'd be more practical to wake up someone with the skills to sort out his immediate problems rather than on the off chance they'd be fun to date.

Given that movies are still uncomfortable with science fiction – *Rogue One*, the latest instalment in the highest-profile space-opera franchise around, includes *no science-fiction elements whatsoever* in its melange of war movie, heist movie and contemporary politics – it's no surprise that this uses the Avalon as a big playground, like the shopping malls in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) or *Pretty Woman* (1990). The cosmic yearning John Wyndham called "the outward urge" (which at least gets lip service in *Interstellar* and *Arrival*) is constantly brought down to the level of uncomfortable romcom hijinx. Imagine Jim played by, say, Woody Allen or Michael Shannon rather than the effortlessly charming Pratt, and the hero's perving on a sleeping Lawrence – who looks spectacular in thin clothes but gets a thinner character to play – would be even creepier than it is. At one point, Aurora claims that to have a shot at romance, Jim has essentially murdered her. This theme, dropped when an action-packed climax and a happy ending are required, is more resonant and fresh than the mix of romcom wish-fulfilment (the ship dispenses all manner of luxuries, especially when accessed by 'gold class' passenger Aurora) and purge-the-core/patch-the-hissing-leak astro-mechanics that occupies the rest of the movie. S

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Stephen Hamel
Michael Maher
Neal H. Moritz
Ori Marmur
Written by
Jon Spaihts
Director of Photography
Rodrigo Prieto
Edited by
Maryann Brandon
Production Designer
Guy Hendrix Dyas
Music
Thomas Newman
Production Mixer
Whit Norris
Costume Designer
Jany Temime
Visual Effects
MPC
Stunt Co-ordinator
Garrett Warren

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Production Companies
Columbia Pictures presents in association with LStar Capital, Village Roadshow Pictures, Wanda Pictures an Original Film production
A Company Films production
A Start Motion Pictures production
A film by Morten Tyldum
Executive Producers
David Householter
Ben Browning
Jon Spaihts
Bruce Berman
Greg Basser
Ben Waisbren
Lynwood Spinks

Cast

Jennifer Lawrence
Aurora Lane
Chris Pratt
Jim Preston
Michael Sheen
Arthur
Laurence Fishburne
Gus Mancuso
Andy Garcia
Captain Norris

Dolby Atmos
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Sony Pictures Releasing UK

The future. The starship Avalon is travelling from Earth to the colony planet Homestead II – a trip that will take 120 years. The crew and colonists are supposed to be in cryogenic suspension throughout. Thirty years into the voyage, however, Jim Preston – an engineer – wakes due to a malfunction, and discovers that he can't re-enter cryosleep. He spends a year alone, in relative luxury thanks to automated support systems, but becomes obsessed with sleeping fellow passenger Aurora Lane, a writer. He considers suicide, but instead tinkers with Aurora's cryopod to wake her up – telling her that she too is the victim of a mechanical fault. They begin a relationship, but Arthur – a robot bartender – tells Aurora that Jim deliberately woke her. She rejects Jim. Other systems on the Avalon become erratic, and begin to fail. Gus Mancuso, a crew member, is revived, suffering from a variety of terminal illnesses. Gus realises that an escalation of system failures caused by a meteor strike – which was responsible for Jim's awakening – will eventually wreck the Avalon, with the loss of all hands. After Gus dies, Jim and Aurora work together to save the ship, and manage to repair a malfunctioning reactor. Jim is willing to sacrifice himself to this end, but Aurora saves him. Jim realises that he can use medical equipment to put Aurora back to sleep for the rest of the trip, but she opts to stay awake with him. Ninety years later, the crew awake to find a forest grown by Jim and Aurora.

Rogue One

USA 2016
Director: Gareth Edwards
Certificate 12A 133m 46s

Reviewed by Tim Hayes

Four years after Disney acquired Lucasfilm and the *Star Wars* jewel in its crown, the wheels of commerce turn and yield up the first film to sit outside the saga's mainstream narrative of the Skywalker family tree – though not very far outside. Officially sporting the righteously on-brand title of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, this continuity implant sits directly before George Lucas's original *Star Wars* (1977) almost to the minute, revealing how the vast star destroyer that loomed over the audience at the start of that film came to pursue one princess, two droids and a workable macguffin in the form of the plans to an impregnable battle station and its unfortunate weak spot.

A culture stuck in perpetual recycle mode tips its hand through an urge to explain away perfectly reasonable pieces of silliness such as the Death Star's overlooked exhaust pipe with highly serious straight-faced rationales – in this case, that the designer put it there deliberately while the geniuses of the Empire were too busy goose-stepping to notice. Such earnest clarifications betray the uneasy relationship with a past that, if hardly carefree, cared about its pop culture in less self-conscious ways. The same urge motivates this film's version of Darth Vader, who for all his steely demeanour and the grand vocals of James Earl Jones on the soundtrack has never stopped seeming on screen like a large actor in uncomfortable boots. Here he's finally a swift and evil juggernaut, carving a corridor of rebels into chum with a windmilling lightsaber. Some of us saw nothing wrong when Vader's helmet rocked slightly on top of David Prowse's head in a stiff breeze during *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), but the days of such analogue vital signs are gone.

Also gone, at least in the *Star Wars Story* aisle, are the visual style markers of previous *Star Wars* films and the romanticism of a John Williams score. Gareth Edwards, earning this film's reins after *Monsters* (2010) showed a fine eye for digital effects and *Godzilla* (2014) played sneaky games with expectations of big critters hitting each other, is clearly a fan, recreating several motifs from the canon. The jagged editing and shallow-focus visuals are a long way from Lucas's blazing colour fields and abstract inclinations, however. When J.J. Abrams restarted the whole vast machine in *The Force Awakens* (2015) and nurtured its screwball tendencies, he also ensured that it would feature suitable chromatic voltage by hiring Dan Mindel as cinematographer, but *Rogue One* is deliberately flattened into a more mundane sensory style, removing one concrete point of difference in a genre where the playing field is now all too level.

Meanwhile the story itself is mundane for less intentional reasons. If Lucas clearly kept his own counsel throughout his stewardship of the saga and threw studio interlopers into the Lucasfilm car park, then *Rogue One* feels annotated into the doldrums. Apart from Ben Mendelsohn's weaselly Orson Krennic, a vain civil servant stuck with a troubled infrastructure investment (and perhaps Donnie Yen as a blind samurai, a nod back to Lucas's magpie cultural influences, now deployed to global box-office advantage), the faces are unmemorable and the characters unexceptional, their meaningful glances unearned. *Rogue One* continues the saga's not-hidden message that the factions standing against fascism are so woeful at the job they should pack it in, while its own narrative fades into offcuts of other established *Star Wars* climaxes. Eventually, a space battle erupts on the high frontier, below which some distractingly sketchy individuals – including an anonymous bunch who have only just turned up for the purpose – assist Jyn (Felicity Jones) with the obligatory gameplay of throwing the switch to fuse the plasmonics and banjax the overspanner.

The Force Awakens resisted this sort of entropy when Abrams and his writers walked the knife edge between homage and pastiche, but it gets in everywhere eventually. It certainly got into the software for recreating inconveniently dead or aged performers, which remains a cast-iron bad idea. *Rogue One* summons up two faces from 1977 and the results show the straitjacket of franchise engineering, where the effort to light some referential visual sparkler rarely gets turned inwards instead towards non-visual matters, like patching up character arcs that are shipping water, or indeed junking them altogether. Lucas couldn't leave his own *Star Wars* visuals alone, but his endless pixel-tweaking was – by internal logic anyway – fully in service of the story. None of it had an off-putting effect to match meeting the simulacrum of a deceased Hammer Film stalwart, speaking from behind a mist of digital ozone.

Fires were started: Diego Luna, Felicity Jones

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Kathleen Kennedy
Allison Shearmur
Simon Emanuel
Screenplay
Chris Weitz
Tony Gilroy
Story
John Knoll
Gary Whitta
Based on characters created by George Lucas
Director of Photography
Greig Fraser
Edited by
John Gilroy
Jabez Olssen
Colin Goudie
Production Designers
Doug Chiang
Neil Lamont
Original Score by/ Score Produced by
Michael Giacchino
Original Star Wars Music by
John Williams
Sound Designers
Christopher Scarabosio
David Acord
Costume Designers
Glyn Dillon
Dave Crossman
Stunt Co-ordinator
Rob Inch
Visual Effects & Animation
Industrial Light & Magic

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Production Company
A Lucasfilm Ltd production
A Gareth Edwards film
Executive Producers
John Knoll
Jason McGatlin

Cast

Felicity Jones
Jyn Erso, 'Stardust'
Diego Luna
Cassian Andor
Ben Mendelsohn
Director Orson Krennic
Donnie Yen
Chirrut Îmwe
Mads Mikkelsen
Galen Erso
Alan Tudyk
K-2SO
Riz Ahmed
Bodhi Rook
Jimmy Smits
Bail Organa
Jiang Wen
Baze Malbus
Forest Whitaker
Saw Gerrera
James Earl Jones
voice of Darth Vader
Genevieve O'Reilly
Mon Mothma

Dolby Atmos
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Part-subtitled

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Buena Vista International (UK)

Publicity title
Rogue One A Star Wars Story

Long ago and far away. Imperial officer Orson Krennic forces scientist Galen Erso to return to the service of the Empire and complete building its Death Star battle station. Galen's young daughter Jyn escapes Krennic's troops and goes into hiding.

Years later, with a faltering rebellion against the tyrannical Empire under way, imperial defector Rook claims to have a message from Galen describing how the station can be destroyed. The rebels find Jyn and send her to meet the defector, along with intelligence officer Andor and droid K-2SO. The trio obtain the message and are joined by Rook, blind warrior Imwe and mercenary Malbus, narrowly escaping before the Death Star attacks. They travel to Eadu, where Galen is based, but a rebel squadron follows with instructions to kill the scientist, who dies in the subsequent battle. Jyn and her group learn of blueprints revealing the Death Star's critical weakness, held at a fortified imperial centre on Scarif, and decide to disobey rebellion orders and steal them. They adopt the call sign 'Rogue One'. Jyn and Andor locate the plans and kill Krennic, while the others sacrifice themselves to protect the mission. The Death Star fires on Scarif, incinerating all of Rogue One, but the plans are successfully sent to Princess Leia Organa, who escapes, pursued by Darth Vader.

Silence

USA/Mexico/United Kingdom/Taiwan 2016
Director: Martin Scorsese
Certificate 15 161m 7s

See Feature on page 16

Reviewed by Richard Combs

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Not a tale of the Christ exactly, *Silence* is the tale of a man who would be like Christ, or at least is ambitious to merge his own image with that of the Saviour. Martin Scorsese's impressive adaptation of Endo Shusaku's most acclaimed novel is the story of a quest for faith and for recovery.

In 1640, Jesuit missionaries Sebastian Rodrigues (Andrew Garfield) and Francisco Garupe (Adam Driver) set out from Portugal for Japan on a mission to disprove a rumour that their fellow missionary and one-time mentor, Father Ferreira (Liam Neeson), has renounced his Christian faith and taken on a Japanese identity. During the voyage, Rodrigues sees the face of the crucified Christ constantly before him, and hears his injunction to "feed my lambs". What torments Rodrigues throughout is the silence that answers his every prayer to alleviate the suffering of the lambs.

Much later, hounded in his turn by the authorities, Rodrigues sees that persecuted face shimmering before him again when he drinks from a pool, only now it has become his own ravaged face. In seeking to be like Christ, Rodrigues may also be seeking self-glorification in a martyrdom of his own. But it's not in fact by becoming Christ-like that Rodrigues finds Christ, but by tracing a path through Christ's betrayer Judas, a figure who has more than one representative here. Rodrigues's passage from conviction through doubt and self-questioning and back to faith is a dialogue he conducts with himself, but simultaneously it is made extrovert through other figures who reflect and distort the process.

Their distortion becomes a clarification for Rodrigues. Judas, as an essential figure in this process, came into focus for Scorsese in *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), where he was the Zealot who would lead Christ back to his mission, but he was present too as the undermining buddy who was also a responsibility in *Mean Streets* (1973). *Silence* is Scorsese's most expansive historical canvas, but in the tightness with which it plots these torturing relationships that might lead to enlightenment it is his most hermetic, secretively enclosed.

The tightness is even emphasised by the fact that Rodrigues is caught in two relationships – a kind of double doubling – which drive home the same lesson. There is the miserable, scrabbling figure of Kichijiro (Kubozuka Yosuke), given to Rodrigues and Garupe as a guide on their secretive entry into Japan (Jesuits have been forbidden from the country since 1633). Kichijiro, who is an apostate Christian, becomes Rodrigues's permanent hanger-on, forever begging to be forgiven for some new lapse or weakness. By the end, Rodrigues can express gratitude rather than contempt that Kichijiro has been one route that has kept him true to his vocation for forgiveness.

And then there is Rodrigues's kinship with Father Ferreira, whom he eventually meets and who confesses that he did apostatise in order to save Japanese Christians from the punishment of 'the pit': being trussed in a body sack and suspended in a hole in the ground, with blood slowly dripping from an incision in the neck. Rodrigues will also eventually be faced with this test – either to hold true to his faith by refusing to perform the ritual of stepping on the *fumie* (Christian images imprinted on a copper plate) or apostatise to save those in the pit. His humanity compels him to do the latter, but he is left asking himself, as Endo's novel puts it, "if all this talk about love is not, after all, just an excuse to justify my own weakness... I wonder if there is any difference between Kichijiro and myself."

"Lord, I have fought against your silence," says a despairing Rodrigues. In the end he does respond to the 'voice' within this silence, a voice that tells him, "I fought alongside you, I was never silent," and instructs him to tread on the images. In Endo's novel, Rodrigues asserts because of this that "my Lord is different from the God that is preached in the churches".

Rodrigues's last decades are spent in the service of the Japanese religious authorities. He lives in domestic silence and security, his existence vouchsafed by the Japanese family he has inherited from an executed man (Later, when he is cremated according to Buddhist rites, the crudely carved crucifix given to him by a villager still lies hidden within his robes.) Like many a Scorsese hero, he must lead a divided life – this one within a witness-protection programme of the soul – that may or may not mean he is lost to God.

A question of faith: Andrew Garfield

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Martin Scorsese
Emma Tillinger Koskoff
Randall Emmett
Barbara De Fina
Gastón Pavlovich
Irwin Winkler
Vittorio Cecchi Gori
David Lee
Screenplay
Jay Cocks
Martin Scorsese
Based upon the novel by Endo Shusaku
Director of Photography
Rodrigo Prieto
Edited by
Thelma Schoonmaker
Production Designer
Dante Ferretti
Score Composed by
Kim Allen Kluge
Kathryn Kluge
Sound Mixer
Guntis Sics
Costume Designer
Dante Ferretti
Stunt Co-ordinator
George Aguilar

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Production Companies
Paramount Pictures, SharpSword Films and AI Film present in association with Catchplay, IM Global, Verdi Productions an EFO Films, YLK, G & G, Sikelia and Fábrica de Cine production
A Martin Scorsese picture
In association with The Fyzz Facility
Executive Producers
Dale A. Brown
Matthew J. Malek
Manu Gargi
Tyler Zacharia
Ken Kao
Dan Kao
Niels Juul
Chad A. Verdi
Len Blavatnik
Aviv Giladi
Lawrence Bender
Stuart Ford
Michelle Verdi
Nicholas Kazan
Gianni Nunnari
Paul Breuls
Wayne Marc Godfrey
Brandt Andersen
Michael Barnes

Cast
Andrew Garfield Father Sebastian Rodrigues
Adam Driver Father Francisco Garupe
Asano Tadanobu interpreter
Ciarán Hinds Father Valignano
Ogata Issey Inoue, old samurai
Tsukamoto Shinya Mokichi
Oida Yoshi Ichizo
Kubozuka Yosuke Kichijiro
Liam Neeson Father Christovao Ferreira

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

In 1640, two Portuguese Jesuit missionaries, Father Sebastian Rodrigues and Father Francisco Garupe, travel to Japan to disprove a rumour that their one-time mentor, Father Ferreira, has apostatised and taken on a Japanese identity. (Since 1633, Japan has officially been closed to the Jesuits, and their Japanese converts have been violently persecuted.) In Macao, Rodrigues and Garupe engage the dissolute Kichijiro to be their guide. They meet 'hidden Christians' in Tomogi, and later take their ministry to Kichijiro's own village (Kichijiro, it turns out, was Christian but apostatised when his family was put to death). Hostages are taken from Tomogi and eventually tortured to death when the villagers refuse to surrender the two priests. Rodrigues and Garupe travel on separately. Kichijiro betrays Rodrigues to the Japanese inquisitor Inoue. Rodrigues later sees Garupe drowned when he refuses to apostatise to save Japanese Christians from a similar fate. Rodrigues is eventually confronted by Ferreira, who has apostatised to save Christian converts from slow death by hanging, and whose work for the authorities now includes a book to disprove the tenets of Christianity. Ferreira believes (like Inoue) that Christianity can never take root in Japan. When he hears the suffering of other converts, Rodrigues finally relents and apostatises. He spends the rest of his life in Japan, working as a religious censor, and on his death is given a Buddhist cremation.

Sing

USA/Japan 2016
Director: Garth Jennings
Certificate U 107m 56s

Reviewed by Alex Dudok de Wit

At the start of this insipid animated animalfest, hopeless theatre impresario Buster Moon (a koala) launches a singing contest with a $100,000 prize. He doesn't have the money, but he still ends up putting on a damn fine show. Laugh at this irony if you can, for *Sing* itself is the contrary: all budget, no fun.

Lacking any business acumen or aesthetic taste, Buster (Matthew McConaughey) has run his theatre into the ground. He conceives the competition as a last-ditch attempt to revive its fortunes, despite the warnings of his friend Eddie (John C. Reilly, a sheep) that singing contests are overdone, and in any case he can't afford it. "When you've hit rock bottom," comes Buster's non sequitur reply, "the only way is up."

A range of superstar wannabes audition, some based on talent-show archetypes: an arrogant mouse (Seth MacFarlane); a shy yet virtuosic elephant (*American Idol* alumna Tori Kelly); a pig (Reese Witherspoon) who dreams of transcending her humdrum married life. The scene is set for a witty send-up of reality-TV clichés – or even a poignant showbiz character study in the mould of *A Chorus Line* (1985) – but *Sing* isn't interested. Deaf to the inherent drama of a singing contest, it instead contrives suspense via absurd subplots about gangs of criminal bears and gorillas. The songs only return for a fist-pumping finale.

Sing has the misfortune to follow the excellent *Zootropolis* (2016), also set in a world of anthropomorphic beasts. Yet unlike that film, this one makes nothing of its conceit: the protagonists' animal identities relate to neither their personas nor the plot (except when they are given foreign accents for comic effect: the German pig, the Russian bears.) The character design is blandly cutesy à la Beanie Babies, whose marketability the studio may be hoping to emulate. The main contestants are unflaggingly earnest, leaving the gags to a litter of lame sidekicks.

Yet on paper this ostensible comedy is a winner. It's made by Illumination Entertainment,

Fantastic beats: *Sing*

the highly competent studio behind the all-conquering *Minions* franchise. They have placed British indie writer-director Garth Jennings at the helm, perhaps in the hope of channelling the brand of sentimental slapstick that won his *Son of Rambow* plaudits. The cast list trumps most live-action films, and the soundtrack features the likes of Queen, The Beatles and Stevie Wonder.

The $75m budget is admittedly modest for a CGI feature –Pixar flicks command more than double that – but it is still a considerable amount to misspend. Jennings's mischievous wit barely comes through, and the actors fail to redeem underwritten characters. A film is more than the sum of its stars, and no amount of fashionable talent can distract from *Sing*'s dearth of focus or fresh material.

In a market almost saturated with sequels and spinoffs, *Sing* has been praised for its original concept, but it is the most derivative of the lot. It features animals only because its competitors do. It pastiches the talent-show format with little irony. And much as a franchise instalment draws from a bank of existing characters and storylines, so this film turns to classic songs for an unearned emotional payoff. The trend for lazily repackaging yesteryear's pop hits has been growing in children's animation, from *Shrek* to *Strange Magic* to *Trolls*, and *Sing* is its nadir. As Buster would say, the only way is up.

Credits and Synopsis

Co-director
Christophe Lourdelet
Produced by
Chris Meledandri
Janet Healy
Written by
Garth Jennings
Edited by
Gregory Perler
Production Design
Eric Guillon
Original Score
Joby Talbot
Supervising Sound Editor
Dennis Leonard
Animation Directors
Patrick Delage
Pierre Leduc

©Universal Studios
Production Companies
Universal Pictures presents a Chris Meledandri production
Presented in association with Dentsu Inc./ Fuji Television Network, Inc.

Voice Cast

Matthew McConaughey
Buster Moon
Reese Witherspoon
Rosita
Seth MacFarlane
Mike
Scarlett Johansson
Ash
John C. Reilly
Eddie
Taron Egerton
Johnny
Tori Kelly
Meena
Nick Kroll
Gunter
Beck Bennett
Lance
Nick Offerman
Norman
Jennifer Saunders
Nana Noodleman
Garth Jennings
Miss Crawly
Jennifer Hudson
young Nana
Peter Serafinowicz
Big Daddy
Nick Kroll
Gunter
Jay Pharoah
Meena's grandfather
Leslie Jones
Meena's mother
Rhea Perlman
Judith
Laraine Newman
Meena's grandmother
Adam Buxton
Stan

Dolby Atmos
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Universal Pictures International UK & Eire

In a world of anthropomorphic animals, koala Buster Moon launches a singing contest to promote his theatre, but accidentally advertises a prize of $100,000. Despite facing bankruptcy, he presses ahead with the auditions and picks four contestants, three of whom want to prove their talent to their sceptical families. Among the rejects is Meena, a gifted elephant hampered by stage fright.

To drum up support for the contest, Buster invites sheep Nana Noodleman, a former stage diva, to the rehearsal. He prepares an elaborate set, complete with an octopus in a tank, to impress her. But the rehearsal is a disaster: first it is revealed that Buster has no money, and then the tank breaks, wrecking the theatre. A dejected Buster cancels the competition, to the dismay of the contestants, who go back to their domestic troubles.

Buster returns to his first job: washing cars. But when he happens on Meena singing to herself, he regains his confidence and decides to stage the contest after all – this time including Meena. The contestants regroup in the ruined theatre and wow an initially cynical crowd with superb performances. The show moves Nana to finance the theatre's reconstruction.

Through the Wall

Israel 2016
Director: Rama Burshtein
Certificate U 110m 36s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

The Almighty moves in mysterious ways in this quirky, thought-provoking Israeli romcom, set in the ultra-Orthodox community. After a decade unsuccessfully seeking a husband, and a sudden, humiliating jilting, Michal (Noa Koler) decides to fix her wedding date herself: "I have the venue, the dress, the apartment. God can easily come up with my groom."

With only 22 days to find a spouse, this sounds less like the single-girl desperation of, say, Rohmer's *Le Beau Mariage* (1982) and more like a high-concept comedy. But director Rama Burshtein, herself ultra-Orthodox, keeps the mood naturalistic and surprisingly nuanced. Michal's varied prospective suitors are portrayed with compassion, not comedy, to the fore: a man so religious that he can't look at Michal on their first date is shown as simply wrong for her feisty personality rather than hilarious.

As in her previous film, the bittersweet *Fill the Void* (2012), another tale of marriage dilemmas, Burshtein wants to show her community to a world that knows little about it. But unlike its predecessor, whose golden light and traditional costuming gave it a period feel, *Through the Wall* is resolutely modern. Part of the film's charm lies in the way that traditional customs and 21st-century living coexist, so that a perennial spinster's 'evil eye' is banished by being daubed with stinking fish, but mobile phones are indispensable to romance.

For those reared on American romcoms, nowadays torn between rooting for female freedom (like this year's *How to Be Single*) and the desirability of a love match, Michal's iron determination to be wedded no matter what seems positively exotic. Her angry confession to the fish-wielding wise-woman at the film's opening ("I'm sick of being handicapped, I want security, and I want to live") feels like a commentary on the social pressures on religious Israeli women to marry. But the film shows Michal's single status as a pitiable lack, while her solution is presented as a genuine leap of faith, a test of her religious belief.

The real leading man in this romance, then, is God. Michal is a "born-again Jew", as her rather less religious mother points out. So there's much unselfconscious discussion about God and the workings of his will, even from those who disapprove of Michal's quest. As a result,

Save the date: Noa Koler

the film's dialogue, which is wry rather than gag-laden, takes a distinctly homiletic turn. With only a handful of scenes with Michal's prospective husbands, characterisation is on the broad side, though Oz Zehavi's sympathetic indie musician makes his presence felt. Koler's gutsy performance is key here, pulling us through the narrative by sheer force of personality. Adroitly portraying vulnerability as well as doggedness, she makes Michal's worried pilgrimage to a shrine in Ukraine reverberate with unhappiness. Unable to feel God there, Michal despairs at the prospect of losing him more than any of her suitors.

Despite Koler's engaging presence, the film's determination to delay the big reveal with story feints and near misses gives the plot a choppy feel. But it's effective in keeping the narrative tension taut right to the end. As Michal enters her wedding groomless and heartsick, to the pitying curiosity of her guests, it's not just her reputation that's at stake but also her belief. However, the 11th-hour happy ending, what one might call a deus ex manager, seems rushed and fairly implausible. It looks less like a relationship than a reward for simply keeping faith.

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Assaf Amir
Written by
Rama Burshtein
Cinematographer
Amit Yasour
Editor
Yael Hersonski
Art Director
Ori Aminov
Music Composed by
Roy Edri
Sound Design
Alex Claude
Daniel Meir
Costume Designer
Hava Levy Rozalski

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Production Companies
Norma Production presents
Produced with the support of the Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts Cinema Project
With the participation of the Leon Recanati Foundation
Supported by the Cultural Administration - Israel Ministry of Culture and Sport, Keshet, Yes, Gesher Multicultural Film Fund, Israel Film Council, Ministry of Culture and Sport, Avi Chai Foundation, Israel Fund for Film Production, Kim and Larry Heyman

Cast
Noa Koler
Michal
Amos Tamam
Shimi
Oz Zehavi
Yoss
Irit Sheleg
Michal's mother
Roni Merhavi
Feigi
Dafi Alpern
Noam
Karin Serrouya
Ziv
Erez Drigues
Gidi
Oded Leopold
Assaf

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Curzon Artificial Eye

Israeli theatrical title
Lavoor et Hakir

Jerusalem, present day. Orthodox Jewish thirtysomething Michal, single for a long time, is desperate to be married. Despite being dumped by prospective husband Gidi, she books Shimi's wedding hall for 22 days' time, hoping that God will provide a husband. Using matchmakers, she has unsuccessful dates with a man too shy to look at her and a deaf psychologist. Her family, friends and rabbi try to talk her out of her plan. Michal starts to lose heart. She makes a desperate pilgrimage to a shrine in Ukraine, where her quest intrigues Israeli pop star Yossi. Gidi proposes to Michal's roommate, leaving Michal devastated. Michal's new date Asaf is put off by her wedding plan, but Shimi encourages her. Michal refuses a playful proposal from Yossi. Proposing to him days later, she is refused. Asaf calls to ask her out again, but is away on the day of the wedding. Michal arrives at her wedding without a groom, eliciting pity from her guests. She is humiliated and weak from fasting. Shimi, whose brief marriage has ended in divorce, proposes to her. Michal thinks she is hallucinating. Shimi convinces her, and they are married.

The Weekend

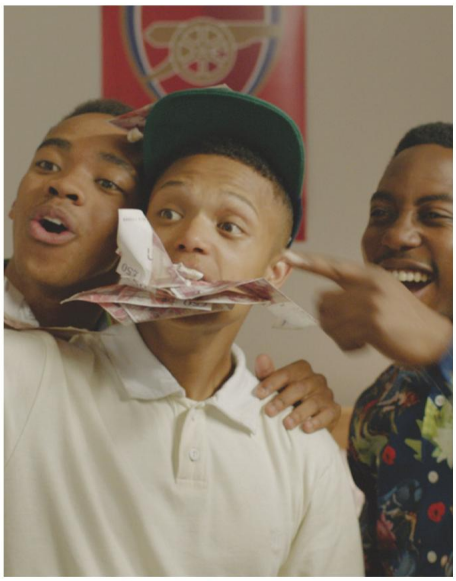
United Kingdom 2016
Director: Sheridan De Myers
Certificate 15 97m 50s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Two identical holdalls, a pedestrian collision on the walkway at Hackney Wick overground station, and soon this amiable if weakly conceived caper flick has three teenage pals spending a stash of cash that doesn't belong to them – plus a couple of bungling criminal henchmen on their trail with orders to retrieve the money. It's certainly an old-fashioned set-up, and *The Weekend* as a whole seemingly belongs to another age, where adolescents don't spend all their time on their phones, the girl next door drops by for actual conversation, and party invites are properly printed rather than distributed online. Difficult to see much of this ringing true with the film's intended urban teenage demographic, while the sweet-natured tone throughout, providing little in the way of onscreen drug use, sex or violence, leaves the proceedings rather lacking the bad-boy edge that has helped, say, Noel Clarke's 'Hood' trilogy to connect with sizeable UK audiences.

Then again, Hackney native Derrick (who's been studying business at Oxford) and his smiley chums Malcolm and Tyler just aren't the bad-boy type. Instead, they're the nice kids who stay on the right side of the law and don't get the girl. As such, it's somewhat refreshing to see a modest British production with an essentially all-black cast trade more heavily on good-hearted bonhomie than street-tough attitude – with central trio Joivan Wade, Percelle Ascott and Dee Kaate all breezily likeable on screen. Indeed, one early scene, where Malcolm has Derrick haplessly attempt to look tough in what appears to be a drugs drop, plays against expectations when it turns out that Malcolm is delivering some possibly illicit beef patties to restaurant traders.

If only the rest of the movie kept trying so hard to wrong-foot us, instead of plodding its way through a familiar crime-comedy plot in which teen protagonists seem set to get their comeuppance for spending the dodgy cash that has miraculously fallen into their laps. That they can't hand it in to the police for fear they'll fall under suspicion themselves is one of the few moments where the script touches on social



Joivan Wade, Percelle Ascott, Dee Kaate

realities (namely, the boys' abiding mistrust of the law), preferring elsewhere to populate the story with larger-than-life comedy types such as diminutive crime boss The Butcher, his none-too-smart heavies and a cheeky housebreaker nicknamed Streets. Supporting performances vary alarmingly in quality, and Sheridan De Myers's direction is more functional than stylish, making a fetish of aerial drone shots of the capital to suggest a sense of scale that's probably above his modest movie's pay grade.

Despite leading man Wade's resilient good cheer and Dee Kaate's neat line in slightly left-field anxiety as joker Tyler, one's enthusiasm is severely limited overall by the decidedly creaky plot and the pervading lack of genuine laughter, even while the cast are working so hard. It's a positive to see a black British comedy attempting a kinder, gentler touch, but the quality's not quite there, and a tendency to treat the female characters as mere eye-candy is most dispiriting of all.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Sheridan De Myers
Kojo Anim
Written by
Marc Small
Davie Fairbanks
Original Story
Kojo Anim
Director of Photography
Diego Rodriguez
Off-line Editor
John Holloway
Art Director
Natalie Potter
Composer
Aiden Hogarth
Head of Audio
Aiden Hogarth
Costume Stylists
Tiwa Jenyo
Kate Sutton
Nadyia Dunston

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Production Companies
A Sheridan De Myers film
Running Films
Release supported by BFI
Executive Producer
Natalie Potter

Cast
Joivan Wade
Derrick
Percelle Ascott
Malcolm
Dee Kaate
Tyler
Ashley Inkz
Damian
Samson Kayo
Tiny
Arnold Jorge
Streets
Nadine Mills
Martina
Marsha Leanne Crosby
Kelly
Frankie Clarence
The Butcher

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
OurScreen

East London, present day. At the train station, returning Oxford business student Derrick bumps into a man who is fleeing two pursuers; the man is killed in a car accident. Derrick reunites with friends Malcolm and Tyler, and receives a welcome gift from near-neighbour Martina, to whom he's obviously attracted, though he is too shy to make a move.

Henchmen Damian and Tiny search through the dead man's belongings in the hospital morgue and realise that an accidental exchange of identical holdalls has left the stolen cash they seek in Derrick's possession. Although Derrick suspects that the cash may be drugs money, he and his two friends are soon spending it freely, renting an expensive Range Rover and hosting a party that makes the unfashionable trio feel cool at last – though Martina accuses Derrick of turning into the kind of self-satisfied hipster he hates. Angry crime boss The Butcher threatens the three friends unless they return all the money. A casino visit to try to win the funds they've already spent sees them losing the car in a wager. Captured by Damian and Tiny, all three look doomed as The Butcher takes out his carving knives, but they are released when Derrick offers money-saving financial advice. Derrick plucks up the courage to kiss Martina. The car rental company returns Malcolm's rucksack, filled with unspent cash.

The White King

United Kingdom 2016
Directors: Alex Helfrecht, Jörg Tittel
Certificate 12A 89m 38s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Scripted and directed by wife-and-husband team Alex Helfrecht and Jörg Tittel, *The White King* is adapted from a novel by Romanian author György Dragomán; it's not hard to detect echoes of Ceausescu's Romania in its retro-dystopian setting. We're in the Homeland, an agrarian-fascist state located in no specific time or place (the film was shot entirely in Hungary), where the national symbol is a pitchfork, or possibly a trident, and a vast statue of the country's supposed founding father, Hank Lumber, stands high on a hill dominating the landscape. Under the credits, a sequence of brutalist black-and-white animation gives what seems to be a potted history of the origins of the Homeland, with cities being destroyed and the population relocated to the countryside (rather as they were in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge).

The trappings of the Homeland are convincingly achieved. The pitchfork/trident symbol is ubiquitous, even being traced in the sky by smoke-trailing fighter planes; black-clad cadets of the Junior Defence (think Hitler Youth) strut proudly about; buildings and posters are adorned with inspirational words in large block capitals – DUTY, FUTURE, FAMILY, SAFE, GLORY; everyone joins in a pompous anthem, 'The Homeland Is Glorious'. The people (apart of course from the ruling class) are housed in what look like ex-army Nissen huts, and clunky surveillance cameras swivel to follow their every movement. Computers and mobile phones seem to be unknown, though we glimpse the remains of some when young Djata (Lorenzo Allchurch) goes in search of a fabled treasure under Hank Lumber's statue. And when he and his mother Hannah (Agyness Deyn) gain entry to the house of General Meade (Greta Scacchi), technology is once more in evidence: whole-wall TV screens showing shimmering nocturnal urban scenes, and a chess-playing automaton called Sophia (voiced by Olivia Williams).

Loaded gun: Lorenzo Allchurch, Jonathan Pryce

So well is all this thought out that it's a shame the plot fails to sustain it. The main storyline – Hannah's quest to find out what has happened to her husband Peter, arrested for seditious remarks – is followed through, but other plot elements are taken up and then dropped, such as the battle between Djata and his friends and two thuggish older lads, or Djata's encounter with Pickaxe (Olafur Darri Olafsson, from the TV series *Trapped*), the guardian of the underhill hoard.

Allchurch makes an impressive feature debut, his open gaze gradually turning to anger and determination, and Deyn builds on her performance in *Sunset Song* (2015), warm and vulnerable but with a core of steel. As Djata's grandfather, Jonathan Pryce channels something of his ambiguous portrayal of the High Sparrow in *Game of Thrones*. But none of the cast can escape stumbling over the chasms in the plot. Towards the end we get a hint that the cowed populace of the Homeland may be edging towards rebellion against the regime. But the final scene is so inconclusive that you wait for the caption 'End of Episode 1' to appear on the screen.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Philip Munger
Teun Hilte
Written by
Alex Helfrecht
Jörg Tittel
Based on the novel by György Dragomán
Adapted from the [György Dragomán] novel by Alex Helfrecht
Director of Photography
René Richter
Editor
Peter R. Adam
Production Designer
Richard Bullock
Music
Joanna Bruzdowicz
Production Sound Mixer
Tamás Dévényi
Costume Designer
Sharon Long

©Djata Limited
Production Company
Oiffy presents an Alex Helfrecht + Jörg Tittel film

Cast
Lorenzo Allchurch
Djata
Agyness Deyn
Hannah Fitz
Ross Partridge
Peter Fitz
Fiona Shaw
Kathrin Fitz
Greta Scacchi
General Meade
Ólafur Darri Ólafsson
Pickaxe
Jonathan Pryce
Colonel Michael Fitz
Malachi Hallett
Shabby
Louis Suc
Bruno
William Ahern
Big Dan
Matthew Postlethwaite
Remus Frunza
Jeffrey Postlethwaite
Romulus Frunza
Clare-Hope Ashitey
Gaby
Ton Kas
Iron Fist
Adebayo Bolaji
Carol
Ilona Kassai
Mrs Setterman
Derek de Lint
Silver Hair
Sophia
herself, a robot
Olivia Williams
voice of Sophia

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Signature Entertainment

A totalitarian state known as the Homeland. Returning from an idyllic day by the river, 12-year-old Djata and his parents Peter and Hannah Fitz are stopped by two secret policemen, who take Peter away. Hannah tells Djata that his father is needed to do essential work. However, the police later return, revealing to Djata that his father is being held in a prison camp as a traitor. Djata visits his grandfather, Colonel Michael Fitz, and grandmother Kathrin. Michael gives the boy a pistol, goading him into shooting a cat, but says he can do nothing for Peter. At the food store, Hannah is told that she can no longer buy food.

Two youths, the Frunza twins, bully Djata and his friends and steal Djata's football. The boys mount an attack on the twins' stronghold; Djata stabs one of them and retrieves the ball. Hannah takes him across the river to appeal to General Meade for help over Peter's fate; at first the general receives them kindly, but then throws them out when Hannah rejects her advances. With his friend Shabby, Djata ventures into the hill under the huge statue of the Homeland's founder, Hank Lumber, where there is said to be a treasure. All he finds is electronic junk and human bones, but the hoard's reputedly brutal guardian, Pickaxe, treats him gently. Heading home, Djata is picked up by his grandfather, who takes him back to Hannah before succumbing to a heart attack. At the colonel's funeral, Peter is brought in in chains. Hannah and Djata embrace him, and when he's driven away they pursue the vehicle.

Why Him?

Director: John Hamburg
Certificate 15 111m 3s

Reviewed by Anna Smith

In 2009's *I Love You, Man*, Paul Rudd's Peter alienated his fiancée by growing close to his potential best man. Writer-director John Hamburg has returned to similar territory in *Why Him?* (co-written with Ian Helfer and actor Jonah Hill), a comedy that owes a debt to *Meet the Parents* but can't match even that film's sequel in terms of comedy or quality.

The tension in *Why Him?* is initially between a father, Ned Fleming (Bryan Cranston), and his potential son-in-law Laird (James Franco) during a Christmas holiday at the latter's California home. Instantly alienating respectable family man Ned, Laird is a childlike computer-games guru whose mind is as filthy as he is rich. He "has no filter", and is constantly referring to having sexual intercourse with Ned's daughter Stephanie, or flirting heavily with Ned's wife Barb (Megan Mullally). As if this didn't pose enough of a threat to a would-be alpha male, Laird's insistence on a paperless household represents a new and frightening world for Ned, who's the head of a printing company that's being put out of business by internet invitations. The only paper visible in Laird's edgy modern mansion is an edible variety, cooked by a celebrity chef. Everything about this man is try-hard and contemporary, with no lasting value: the written word literally disappears with every mouthful.

While the contrast between the two men has comic potential, and a few of Laird's whimsical characteristics amuse, the script seems far more interested in toilet humour – again, quite literally. An agonisingly long sequence takes place in the en suite of the guest bedroom, where Ned discovers – surprisingly well into his stay – that there is no toilet paper supplied. Seated on the loo, he is humiliated by the camp estate manager Gustav (a laboured Keegan-Michael Key) looming over him while attempting to reboot the Japanese electronic cleansing toilet. Cranston does his best grimacing but this is surely a career low for the Oscar-nominated *Breaking Bad* actor. Mullally also suffers an

Paper tiger: Zoey Deutch, James Franco

embarrassing toilet scene, but the actress is at least granted a few opportunities to play comedy sidekick to Cranston's angry, unfunny Ned. There are fleeting moments of amusement when she becomes stoned and amorous at a party, and later overshares with a certain rock group who make a guest appearance.

As Laird, Franco channels some of the cheeky charm and comedy posturing that he brought to Harmony Korine's *Spring Breakers* (2012), but the joke gets old very quickly – as does his *Pink Panther* routine with Gustav, who regularly pounces on him to keep his martial-arts skills sharp. And although belatedly acknowledged by the script, Stephanie (Zoey Deutch) is almost completely shut out of the picture as the men in her life bicker and bond. For all its unlikely plot developments, the most preposterous part of the story is the idea that such a bright, down-to-earth, right-on student would give either of these pompous, self-centred men the time of day. Why him, indeed?

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Shawn Levy
Ben Stiller
Jonah Hill
Dan Levine
Screenplay
John Hamburg
Ian Helfer
Story
Jonah Hill
John Hamburg
Ian Helfer
Director of Photography
Kris Kachikis
Editor
William Kerr
Production Designer
Matthew Holt
Music
Theodore Shapiro
Sound Mixer
Ken Segal
Costume Designer
Leesa Evans

Production Company
Twentieth Century Fox presents
Executive Producer
Georgia Kacandes

Cast
James Franco
Laird Mayhew
Bryan Cranston
Ned Fleming
Zoey Deutch
Stephanie Fleming
Megan Mullally
Barb Fleming
Griffin Gluck
Scotty Fleming
Keegan-Michael Key
Gustav

In Colour

Distributor
20th Century Fox International (UK)

US, the present. Ned and Barb Fleming and their 15-year-old son Scott leave their home in Michigan to spend Christmas with student daughter Stephanie and her new boyfriend Laird in California. Ned and Barb are surprised to discover that Laird is a famous Silicon Valley millionaire, and are unsettled by his vulgar language and attempts to impress, such as having a tattoo of the Fleming family on his back. Scott and Barb begin to warm to Laird and his friends, but Ned remains competitive and refuses to approve of Laird's plan to propose to Stephanie. He gives Laird the few days before Christmas to change his mind. Ned learns that Stephanie is planning to quit college to run a charity project for Laird. He asks an employee at his ailing print firm to hack into Laird's computer to reveal that Laird is in debt. When confronted, Laird explains that this is his personal account – his estate manager Gustav confirms that Laird has many millions in his business accounts. Laird invests in Ned's company, saving it from debt, but proud Ned and Laird have a fight, and Ned, Barb and Scott return to Michigan. On Christmas Day, Laird lands a helicopter at the Fleming household, surprising a blindfolded Stephanie with the trip. Ned grants his approval for the proposal, which Stephanie declines, saying that she is not ready for marriage but will remain Laird's girlfriend. The closing credits reveal that the Flemings go into the high-end toilet business with Laird.

The Young Offenders

Republic of Ireland 2016
Director: Peter Foott
Certificate 15 83m 26s

Reviewed by Derek O'Connor

Inspired by the true story of Ireland's largest cocaine seizure in 2007, writer-director Peter Foott's feature debut might just be the most innocuous tale about drug dealing – or would-be drug dealers, to be more precise – this side of the amiable *21 Jump Street* reboot, another inspired modern buddy comedy giving kinetic new life to jaded old tropes. Here, what might have been a rote coming-of-age tale in the faux-*Superbad* mould swiftly evolves into something more endearing and at times positively soulful, largely thanks to its hitherto unexplored milieu – the highways and byways of Ireland's south-west – and a charming young cast.

Foott's tall tale follows two dim-witted teenage underachievers going nowhere fast: Jock (Chris Walley), marginally the more knowing of the two, is cheerfully engaged in an ongoing game of cat-and-mouse with a local cop determined to curtail his bike thieving, while cod-philosophical narrator Conor (Alex Murphy) is one slip away from being dismissed from a part-time job at the local fish market. The notion of a better life suggests itself via TV news reports of a cocaine haul from a capsized boat washed up on a nearby beach, sending our pair in hot pursuit of undiscovered bounty. Fear of any potential punishment is somewhat negated by their status as 'young offenders' – any criminal charges will take into account their tender age – a "get out of jail free card", as Jock puts it.

As with any semi-respectable buddy flick, the (rather slight) tale takes second place to the chemistry between the central pairing, and here Foott has struck comedy gold with his leads, screen newcomers Walley and Murphy, whose clueless banter is delivered in a singsong Cork lilt with a loose, semi-improvised feel. At times, their gormless despair at their existence wouldn't feel out of place in a Ken Loach film – imagine *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) with the addition of a nailgun-wielding psychopath and a deft sprinkling of cheerily professed homoerotic undertones. The considerable potential for mawkishness is deftly avoided – Jock's relationship with his violent, alcoholic father (Michael Sands), detailed in a series of brief, tense encounters, and Conor's feuding with his frustrated, overwhelmed mother (Hilary Rose) infuse the proceedings with a genuine poignancy that offsets the inevitable descent into wanton shenanigans.

Bicycle thieves: Chris Walley, Alex Murphy

The Young Offenders owes a particular debt to Foott's earlier music-video work with subversive hip-hop outfit Rubberbandits, another inspired comedy duo with wry socioeconomic underpinnings. Coasting amiably through its brief 80-minute running time (plus credits), the film works best in its first hour, as Jock and Conor traverse the magnificent Cork countryside via stolen bicycles, showcasing a region of Ireland still relatively untapped by filmmakers, visually or thematically (though the aforementioned Ken Loach utilised it for his 2006 civil war drama *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*).

The Young Offenders has been a major success at the Irish box office, and Foott has already stated an interest in bringing his scatological antiheroes back for a possible TV series detailing their further escapades. It's not hard to imagine Jock and Conor as repeat offenders.

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Peter Foott
Julie Ryan
Writer
Peter Foott
Director of Photography
Paddy Jordan
Editor
Colin Campbell
Set Dresser
Anthony Courtney
Composer
Ray Harmen
Production Sound Mixer
Daniel Crowley
Costume Consultant
Sarah Yeoman

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Production Companies
A Vico Films Production
In association with
Bord Scannán na hÉireann/ Irish Film Board
A Peter Foott film
Executive Producers
Michael Doherty
Cormac Fox
Rory Gilmartin

Cast
Alex Murphy
Conor MacSweeney
Chris Walley
Jock Murphy
Hilary Rose
Mairead MacSweeney
Dominic MacHale
Sergeant Healy
PJ Gallagher
Ray, drug dealer
Shane Casey
Billy Murphy
Pascal Scott
farmer
Michael Sands
Jock's dad
Ciarán Bermingham
Superintendent Flynn

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Vertigo Films

South-west Ireland, present day. Jock and Conor are teenage school friends who spend their days indulging in pranks and – in Jock's case – petty crime. Both are living in dysfunctional single-parent households. When Jock sees a TV news report of a cocaine haul from a capsized boat washed up on a nearby beach, he persuades Conor to travel to the area in search of unclaimed contraband. The pair make the journey on stolen bicycles, without knowing that local police officer Healy has planted a tracking device on one of the bikes in an effort to ensnare Jock. Following a narrow escape from Healy, the duo arrive at the beach and locate a bale of cocaine in the possession of a sleeping drug dealer, Ray. They steal the cocaine, only for the bale to tear open on their journey home, leaving them minus the drugs and with a vengeful Ray in pursuit. When Ray arrives at Conor's house, he tortures the two friends and also Conor's mother, until a psychotic rival of Jock's inadvertently affords them the chance to overpower him. Healey receives the credit for Ray's capture, while Jock is removed from the care of his abusive father and sent to live with Conor and his mother.

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Home cinema

Hard cell: Pina Pellicer and Marlon Brando in *One-Eyed Jacks*

UNEASY RIDERS

With their antiheroes, subtle subversions and moral complexity, two revisionist westerns question the idea of 'Americanness'

ONE-EYED JACKS

Marlon Brando; US 1961; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray; 141 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: introduction by Martin Scorsese, audio script notes by Marlon Brando, new video essays, trailer, essay by Howard Hampton

MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER

Robert Altman; US 1971; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray; 121 minutes; 2.40:1; Features: audio commentary with Robert Altman and producer David Foster, new and vintage documentaries, Q&A with production designer Leon Ericksen, archival interviews with Vilmos Zsigmond, 'Dick Cavett Show' excerpts, essay by Nathaniel Rich

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

If once we looked at the 'revisionist western' as a rebel-era pivot away from the genre's ideological portrait of Americanness, towards a state of withering post-war disillusionment, we can now see how the entire genre spent decades struggling to understand the distance between nationalistic fairytales and the empty bloodletting howl of reality. The *film noir* era surely had its influence; the punishment began after the wakefulness brought on by WWII, from Hawks's *Red River* (1948) to Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), and onwards through Mann, Boetticher, Fuller, Aldrich, Hellman, Peckinpah, Leone and Eastwood; and for a long while, until the genre had finished revising itself and simply become irrelevant, every western felt like an uneasy reckoning with American dogma about identity and meaning.

The coinage 'anti-western' has always been taxonomically inappropriate but revealing – the films of the 1960s-70s were antithetical to orthodox westerns not in terms of their iconographic 'westernness', which was indelible, but in the gravity of their grief and nihilism. An uneasy reckoning may be the clearest evocation you can conjure of both *One-Eyed Jacks* and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, two idiosyncratic (and geographically distinct) films rich in the ambivalence and regret that came to define their species.

Of the two, Brando's notorious single shot at directing has always been the true *film maudit*, subject to the familiar backlash that popular culture reserves for runaway productions driven by naive egomaniacs. (The disc is the result of an all-out Film Foundation digital restoration.) As with Michael Cimino's *Heaven's Gate* (1980), among many other 'follies', the tales of budget triplings, wasted footage, firings, rewrites and tantrums were and still are better known than the film itself.

The director originally assigned to the project was Stanley Kubrick, and his frustrated exit was prompted by his asking Brando why it was, exactly, they were making the film; he was told, "Because I've already paid Karl Malden $200,000." Brando himself reportedly never even liked westerns, but he still dallied on location, waiting for perfect clouds and waves, broke the bank, shot a million feet of film, fashioned an eight-hour work print and first delivered a rumoured five-hour cut to Paramount.

Spiralling production entropy set a pattern for Brando which he repeated over and over in other people's films, from *The Missouri Breaks* (1976) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979) to *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1996). But in taking on the direction of *One-Eyed Jacks* himself, Brando resolutely made a film about himself – his own stardom, rampant narcissism, disgusted opinion of Hollywood, career ambivalence, lifelong Oedipal tensions, hatred of authority and so on.

The story – the uncredited hands stirring the stew included Rod Serling and Sam Peckinpah – is in outline an unexceptional vengeance narrative: in Mexico, bankrobbers Rio (Brando) and Dad (Malden) are chased down by a posse and separated; promising to return with fresh horses, Dad takes the loot and scrams, leaving Rio to do six years in a Mexican prison before he escapes and sets out to exact personal justice. His return, and the rest of the film, is a secretive, hyper-extended slow burn in which the time spent waiting (for revenge, for a bank robbery, for a town festival to end, for the right wave) becomes an existential conundrum – five years before Monte Hellman's Godot-ish *The Shooting*. The more Rio (and Brando) procrastinates, through lies and subterfuge and just plain coolness, the more the missions on everyone's minds seem absurd and impossible to fulfil.

A breaking point comes, of course, beginning a cascade of suffering, culminating in the director-star crucifying himself under a good flogging, establishing long before Eastwood, Redford, Costner and Gibson the paradigm of the actor-auteur striving to convert himself into a martyred icon. But the film's undeniable self-worship, so irritating to critics in 1961, feels tainted by uncertainty; Brando as a visual choice-maker seems much more comfortable turning Charles Lang's widescreen camera on the landscape, and there are evocative, muscular vistas of Death Valley and Monterey that make the long location waits pay off like gangbusters.

Meanwhile, Brando's restlessness litters the film with confrontations that don't quite deliver their points, filling the air with ellipses, mysteriously punctuating a story full of subtle subversions we'd see more of as the subgenre developed: Mexican virgins who wear white lace yet turn out to be easily seducible; sheriffs who are secretly sociopathic; glowering antiheroes who turn out to be all anti-; murders that happen for all the wrong reasons.

It's easily fetishised, though one wonders if it would be gathering so much retrospective ardour if the nimbus of trouble didn't hang over it – if Brando hadn't directed it, and if it had come in under budget. Great hay is made of the saga in the disc's supplements, in Howard Hampton's skylarking essay and in video jaunts by the critic David Cairns and genre blogger Toby Roan, with Cairns in particular hunting down pungent evidence of *film noir*, of Brando's doubling/self-refracting career, of echoes of other films (via the sets and, from *Vertigo*, an oft-used background painting glimpsed through high windows), and of the reshoots Paramount performed to straighten the narrative lines, which it couldn't quite manage to do.

Julie Christie as Mrs Miller...

The muddy ground of Altman's masterpiece, on the other hand, was never salted with doubt – from the beginning, it was revered as an innovation, a vivid blast of Americana and a New Hollywood landmark, though (as a Dick Cavett interview with Pauline Kael from 1971, included on the disc, makes clear) a few nitwit critics (Rex Reed, Rona Barrett) groused about the fog of overlapping dialogue that established Altman's unique directorial voice. History has been with Kael – the film is time travel, as

These two idiosyncratic films are rich in the ambivalence and regret that came to define their species

... and Warren Beatty as McCabe

sensually immersive as any American film of any era. The manifestation of the foggy Pacific Northwest in the 1880s (abetted famously by Vilmos Zsigmond's pre-flashing the film stock) has the intoxicating quality of a gaslight memory, a diffuse, smoky, groggy return to the past. You are *there*, in this germinating mountain mining town so small most of the buildings are still being framed from raw lumber (the set builders wore period clothes and erected buildings progressively, on camera, as the shoot went on); in this Old West, everything is new. (In ordinary westerns, the buildings all look a century old, which is just bad historical design.) Altman's camera floats into this dead-on milieu with wide-open eyes, piercing the mist and exploring as if it were one of the town's newcomers, half-hearing conversations and squinting through bustling human fauna.

The story, from Edmund Naughton's novel, is more traditional, if suitably anti-capitalist, as Warren Beatty's somewhat clueless and drunken frontier gambler rides into the nameless ersatz town and slowly entrepreneurises the entire population, gradually acquiring nearly everything (starting with a brothel, captained by Julie Christie's savvy junkie whore) and causing the place to prosper. Although romance aches to be realised, nothing stays the same, even on the frontier, and news of enterprise spreads, drawing in shady agents from the east to buy out or shut down McCabe, by hook or crook.

It all unfolds so organically it's like heavy snow falling and building into drifts, with a classic Altmanesque crisscrossing of stories: Shelley Duvall's vulnerable young mail-order bride/widow; Keith Carradine's good-time cowboy; barkeep Rene Auberjonois's wary attempts to play every business interest against the others; a young black couple's observant existence on the social edges; William Devane's vainglorious lawyer; plus half a dozen other recurring personages, all alive and busy in the life of the town even when, it seems, they're not in the frame. I haven't even yet mentioned the famous soundtrack – comprising three droning, dreamy, elusive Leonard Cohen songs, not of the period but hauntingly apt, and often faintly heard in the background, like something someone is remembering.

A New Wave western that is in the end more of a classic capitalist tragedy-slash-morality tale, Altman's picture doesn't age as some others of his peak films do (*Nashville* never quite lived up to Kael's workprint-fuelled hallelujah chorus) – its passionate capture of bygone reality still glows, hot to the touch. Perhaps it has everything to do with the life-as-filming approach Altman created; even Zsigmond, in the compelling making-of doc on Criterion's disc, marvels at Altman's 'no hurry' attitude, working without a schedule and deciding every morning what scenes they'd shoot. (He also credits Altman with teaching him the proper use of a zoom lens.) Both westerns take their essence from the defiant, holistic ways in which they were made – one a struggle with self, the other an alternate world to be not merely watched but lived in.

New releases

THE BLUE LAMP

Basil Dearden; UK 1949; StudioCanal Vintage Classics/ Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; Certificate PG; 84 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: audio commentary, locations feature, BBC Radio 3 essay by Simon Heffer, production stills gallery

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

A landmark film in bringing the police procedural to British screens, *The Blue Lamp* is best viewed nowadays as a fascinating historical record of the social attitudes of its day, yet it also remains an excellent example of the often undervalued Basil Dearden's unflappable talent for combining drama, action and comedy in a smoothly accessible piece of storytelling.

Based in and around the old Paddington Green police station, the film captures a Britain with the war just behind it but the scars still showing. It's not just the derelict bombsites but the social disintegration wrought by losses during the conflict that's now impacting on a generation of youth lacking parental discipline and turning to crime – coshes and even firearms at the ready.

Dirk Bogarde puts on a febrile turn as the dangerous ruffian –he shows an almost sexual thrill in stroking the barrel of his revolver – clearly marking a deep generational division from Jack Warner's veteran bobby and indeed Jimmy Hanley's newly recruited constable. The result is a violent confrontation that shocked audiences at the time (though it looks commonplace now), but it is clearly set in the context of a local community predominantly respectful of the police. Indeed, there is a strong communal identity within the force itself, where shared activities include a choir and a darts league. In this instance, the past really is another country, but the film's prophetic fears and idealistic aspirations are strongly interlinked, the latter prevailing in a final-reel automotive pursuit which in itself set the template for many a future homegrown crime flick and TV cop show.

Disc: A terrific transfer brings out the best in the image, showcasing cameraman Gordon Dines's superb night work on rain-slicked streets. Tremendously valuable too is the commentary track in which original screenwriter Jan Read (a Scot who also worked in the US with Lang and Kazan) traces the project's origins at Gainsborough Studios – during which he was the first filmmaker ever to ride along with the Met – and its subsequent emergence as a spruced-up and somewhat softened Ealing production after Gainsborough unwisely passed on his efforts. Sadly, Read passed away in 2012, but this is a useful record of his contribution to a special time in British filmmaking, one that's celebrated in Simon Heffer's sharply analytical audio essay, also included. Londoners will relish the location featurette, showing much that remains today and much that's long gone.

BURNT OFFERINGS

Dan Curtis; US 1976; Arrow/Region B Blu-ray / Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 116 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: interviews, audio commentaries

Reviewed by James Blackford

Roger Ebert laid into *Burnt Offerings* when it came out, damning its storyline of a family who rent a country mansion inhabited by evil forces as hackneyed gothic hokum. The clichés are all there for sure, but Ebert missed the point. *Burnt Offerings* isn't trying to reinvent the horror film. On the contrary, it is a modest haunted-house tale that revels in the hallmarks of gothic horror while also adding a few interesting innovations of its own.

The film's palatial haunted mansion (Dunsmuir House, California – also used in *Phantasm*) is an atmospheric and claustrophobic setting. It doesn't terrorise its inhabitants with the usual apparitions and flying crockery, but rather attacks their minds, feeding on their anxieties in order to restore itself: the father (Oliver Reed) becomes haunted by terrifying waking visions of a menacing chauffeur from his childhood, while his overbearing wife (Karen Black) is morbidly obsessed (at the expense of her family) with the promise of domestic bliss offered by their grand new home. More disturbingly, the house's evil forces turn the family members against one another – there is a particularly effective scene when a possessed Reed turns on his son, nearly drowning him in the swimming pool.

With this intense psychological aspect, *Burnt Offerings* foreshadows *The Amityville Horror* (1979) and *The Shining* (1980), the latter also about a city family who spend a season as caretakers of a remote haunted property. While not in the same league as that film, *Burnt Offerings* is modestly effective, especially when it focuses on the meltdown of the nuclear family.

Disc: Extras include cast and crew interviews, original trailers and audio commentaries.

CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

Frank Lloyd and Joseph von Sternberg (uncredited); US 1927; Flicker Alley/Region-free Blu-ray and Region 1 DVD Dual Format; 71 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: 'Clara Bow: Discovering the It Girl'

Reviewed by Pamela Hutchinson

Feted flapper Clara Bow holds up one corner of a handsome love triangle in the diverting silent drama *Children of Divorce*. Alongside Gary Cooper (her offscreen beau) and Esther Ralston, Bow stars in a tale of modern marriage, in which three friends are romantically stymied by the gold-digging imperative and the horror of following their parents into the divorce courts. Ralston is sweetness itself, and Bow is unstoppably, disconcertingly flirtatious, but Cooper, awkwardly miscast in a society drama, is sour-faced throughout. It's an odd look for a young man who wakes up to find a naked Bow in his bed – his "one-night bride" after a drunken binge. Cooper was hired at Bow's insistence – at one point during the shoot he was sacked, only to be taken back after his replacement proved even worse – and it can't be denied that they have delectable chemistry.

Bow and beau: *Children of Divorce*

BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (1)

The film's rather prim resolution may disappoint, but it did require Bow to turn in the most emotionally devastating scene of her career. Both Victor Fleming, the fiancé she threw over for Cooper, and Josef von Sternberg, the director who was hired to save the film, pointed to that performance as proof that her talent required far better material.

Sadly, although Bow made better films than this, she never was cast in anything that fully exploited her range. *Children of Divorce* remains a very fetching movie that epitomises the sexual confusion and the cocktail-swigging excess of the jazz age. It is also a showcase for Bow's lasting appeal.

Disc: The 4k restoration is mostly stunning, though there is some evidence of print damage. Extras include a very good Bow documentary narrated by Courtney Love (which has appeared elsewhere) and essays by David Stenn (excerpted from his Bow biography), Hugh Munro Neely and Rodney Sauer, who compiled the excellent score for the Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra.

EVERY THING WILL BE FINE

Wim Wenders; Germany/Canada/France/Sweden/ Norway 2015; IFC/Region 1 DVD; 119 minutes; 2.35:1; Features: behind-the-scenes featurette, interviews, trailer

Reviewed by Brad Stevens

Although Wim Wenders and his fellow New German Cinema director Werner Herzog have both spent the past three decades redefining themselves as quirky American independents, it is mainly their documentary work that has enjoyed critical acclaim and commercial success. Wenders in particular has turned out several peculiarly half-hearted narrative films that have lacked any sense of purpose and have barely been distributed. *Every Thing Will Be Fine*, an international co-production shot in Canada, is his first fictional feature since *Palermo Shooting* (2008), and seems unlikely to receive much more exposure than its predecessor.

James Franco stars as Tomas Eldan, a stalled novelist who accidentally kills a child while driving, subsequently developing a relationship with the boy's mother Kate (Charlotte Gainsbourg) and brother Christopher. Wenders treats this potentially melodramatic material in a low-key style, suggesting a return to his European roots while simultaneously revealing the influence of the American auteurs – notably John Ford – he has previously declared allegiance to. The *mise en scène* is strikingly rich, utilising complex patterns of linked imagery: a Narusian tracking shot showing Tomas's second encounter with Kate will be repeated later, with the camera moving in the opposite direction, as Tomas walks through a forest with the teenage Christopher. Books play a prominent role in several scenes (a motif entirely appropriate to a film concerned, as so often in Wenders, with the process of fiction-making) and the use of decor is admirable: landscapes, which have a purely decorative function in much of

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE EAST

This proto-feminist take on the fairytale favourite offers a feisty cross-dressing heroine and a spoonful of sweetened socialism

THREE WISHES FOR CINDERELLA

Václav Vorlícek; Czechoslovakia/Germany 1973; Second Run/Region 0 DVD; 84 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: filmed appreciation by Michael Brooke, booklet essay by Tim Lucas

Reviewed by Pamela Hutchinson

With Disney finally catching up to the idea that little girls might enjoy strong-minded, boisterous, independent heroines, even the kind that wield a bow and arrow, it's a joy to catch up with a Czechoslovakian film that set that template more than 40 years ago. *Three Wishes for Cinderella* (*Tri orísky pro Popelku*) is a wintry fairytale adaptation that asserts a little-spoken truth: there is more than one way to woo a prince.

Made in 1973, director Václav Vorlícek's *Three Wishes for Cinderella* belongs to Czechoslovakia's second wave of fairytale films, and is one of the most popular in the genre. It was a co-production with East Germany, shot in Prague, Bohemia and the Babelsberg studios, with a cast from both countries and released in both languages. It has now become a beloved fixture on the Christmas TV schedules of several European nations – stations have been known to receive complaints if it is not shown. In fact, however, its snowy setting came about by circumstance, because the German locations were only available in winter.

The English translation of the film's Czech title is 'Three Nuts for Cinderella' (Cinderella's 'wishes', each of which brings her a step closer to the prince, come from three magical hazelnuts), and the storyline differs from the widely told French version by Charles Perrault. There is no pumpkin carriage, fairy godmother or midnight curfew; there *is* a slipper, but although it is dainty it is not made of glass. The film is loosely based on a Czech version of the tale by folklorist Bozena Nemcová, which is itself a variation on the Brothers Grimm interpretation, but without its bloody mutilations.

Once upon a time in a feudal medieval village in the woods, a beautiful, fatherless young woman called Cinderella is kept as a domestic drudge by her vicious stepmother and vain stepsister (two hugely enjoyable turns by German-speaking actress Carola Braunbock and Czech Daniela Hlavácová). As played by Libuše Safránková, who began her long career with a clutch of fairytale roles, Cinderella is pretty and winsome but also spirited and outspoken: she backchats her bullies and sweeps soot into their faces, and is bold enough to tease the charming but chipmunkish prince (Pavel Trávnícek). From behind a pink veil at the longed-for ball, she sets him a riddle with her identity as the answer, a clear hint that she is far more of a prize than he is.

Although her stepmother sets degrading and difficult tasks such as picking peas from a bucket of ashes, Cinderella completes them with ease – she has an enchanted affinity with the natural world, and is assisted by a team of doves (animal scenes such as these exemplify the film's low-tech but efficient special effects). She is a skilled horsewoman and archer, too: long before she sets foot in a ballroom she has captured the prince's admiration with her accomplishments in the field. When she rides her beloved horse, an ecstatic montage of low-angled shots takes in the spectacle of her liberated smile and hair swaying in the breeze. On one occasion, she rides out in boyish drag: a huntsman's outfit with a green feathered hat and hose, implying that this rags-to-riches heroine is as much a Robin Hood legend as a princess-in-waiting. It is hard to avoid ingesting a spoonful of sweetened socialism alongside the film's proto-feminism, with Cinderella as a symbolic worker rising to power, and her step-relatives the oppressive ruling classes.

Dream come true: Libuše Safránková, Vítezslav Jandák and Pavel Trávnícek in *Three Wishes for Cinderella*

In huntsman's outfit and green feathered hat, this rags-to-riches heroine is as much a Robin Hood legend as a princess-in-waiting

Safránková as Cinderella

Such politicised readings map easily on to this fairytale film, in the main because it was made in two communist states, but also because of Vorlícek's mostly realist *mise en scène*. There's no haze or sparkle to accompany the magic that hoists our heroine up the social scale. Cinderella's hair may be artfully pinned but her face is grimy and the stables and barns she skulks in are a mix of dull browns and greys. The film's most outré visual flourish is the deliciously elaborate costumes. The clothes worn by the upper-class characters, both the vile women who abuse Cinderella and the noble royals who welcome her, are outlandish concoctions of primary colours and glitter, which have understandably gained cult appreciation over the years. Cinderella's earthy garb is more in keeping with the wooded landscape, underlining her sympathy with nature. Her most glamorous get-up, her magical ballgown, is a pastel vision, suggesting comparative restraint and elegance – and perhaps also that she would rather be dressed for riding instead.

In this high-definition 4K restoration, the film looks fresh and detailed and ready to be enjoyed at many festive firesides to come. This edition also includes a vastly well-informed video appreciation by Michael Brooke and a similarly detailed essay from Tim Lucas.

Experimenta

A VALENTINE FOR SHIRLEY

A collection of home movies, films and unfinished fragments celebrates one of the unsung greats of American independent cinema

THE MAGIC BOX: THE FILMS OF SHIRLEY CLARKE

FEAR FLIGHT/JELLY ROLL MORTON/DANCE IN THE SUN/IN PARIS PARKS/BULLFIGHT/DECROUX/ THE ROSE AND THE PLAYERS/A MOMENT IN LOVE/BRUSSELS LOOPS/BRIDGES-GO-ROUND/A SCARY TIME/CHRISTOPHER AND ME/ SKYSCRAPER/ROBERT FROST: A LOVER'S QUARREL WITH THE WORLD/BUTTERFLY/24 FRAMES PER SECOND/FOUR JOURNEYS INTO MYSTIC TIME/SAVAGE/LOVE/TONGUES

Shirley Clarke; US 1929-87; Milestone/Region-free Blu-ray and DVD (separate releases); 478 minutes total; 1:37:1; Features: alternative edits, stills galleries, outtakes, home movies, television interview, 'Lions Love' outtakes, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

"Everyone's very nice to me and they don't take me quite seriously," said Shirley Clarke (1919-97) in a 1956 interview about the trials of forging a career in a male-dominated profession.

Sadly, she's unable to appreciate the seriousness with which she's being taken now, but her daughter Wendy is extensively involved with Milestone Films' ongoing 'Project Shirley', restoring, reissuing and sometimes premiering Clarke's entire film output. In *S&S* April 2015, Ashley Clark reviewed the first three volumes, focusing on individual features (*The Connection*, *Portrait of Jason*, *Ornette: Made in America*), but this three-disc 'magic box' offers a far more rounded portrait of Clarke herself, and its comprehensiveness and Milestone's evident desire to include almost every scrap of footage that bears her imprimatur (whether as director or editor, finished or unfinished, professional or amateur) puts it firmly in the same labour-of-love category as the National Film Board of Canada's similarly exhaustive DVD survey of Norman McLaren's career.

Given the vast range of material, the discs are commendably clearly organised. Each has its own theme: 'Experimental', 'Dance' and 'Robert Frost and the Home Movies'. The single best-known film is the Oscar-winning *Robert Frost: A Lover's Quarrel with the World* (1963), restored to its original length and offering an affectionate and appropriately colloquial portrait of the great American poet, then in his final year, and proving delightful company for nearly an hour. But it's also the most conventional film in the set, which otherwise is largely a cornucopia of experimental delights, one of which immediately follows the Frost film. Long thought lost, D.A. Pennebaker's 1960 *Christopher and Me* (to which Clarke and Richard Leacock contributed) is a lovely, lyrical childhood fantasy, which leads to 45 minutes of Clarke's personal home movies, charting her life from as early as 1927 and including footage from the shooting of Agnès Varda's *Lions Love* (1969), in which Clarke played an independent filmmaker.

The experimental disc kicks off with *Brussels Loops* (1958), multiple facets of Americana (mostly) shot by Pennebaker and edited by Clarke, whose rhythms prove crucial to the overall experience since it was made for the Brussels World Fair, which precluded a soundtrack. Rhythms are important, too, to the spatially disorienting *Bridges-Go-Round* (1958), though here they're more visual and musical (both versions are included, with strikingly different soundtracks: Louis and Bebe Barron's chirruping electronics versus Teo Macero's vocalised jazz inflections); in retrospect it's clearly a dry run for the Oscar-nominated *Skyscraper* (1961), a beguilingly syncopated musical portrait of one being constructed.

A Scary Time (1960) was commissioned by Unicef, then shelved when its combination of cutesy Halloween antics and footage of far less privileged children was deemed too confrontational towards potential donors. The repeated motif of crying children also found its way into the abstract, partly hand-painted and scratched anti-war film *Butterfly* (1967), while the most exhilaratingly virtuosic piece in the set is the Persian art fantasy *24 Frames per Second* (1977) with its repeated single-frame cuts. In *Tongues* (1982) and *Savage/Love* (1981), Clarke explored primitive video effects to enhance dramatic monologues by Sam Shepard and Joseph Chaikin.

This three-disc 'magic box' offers a rounded portrait of Clarke... the set is largely a cornucopia of experimental delights

But it's disc two that's most disarmingly personal. Clarke originally had ambitions to work in dance, and her early films almost exclusively focus on the subject, whether studying individual dancers or attempting more ambitious film-choreography experiments such as *Bullfight* (1955) or the later video pieces *Journeys into Mystic Time* (1979). Crucially, the disc also includes unfinished work: at this stage in her career (most of the dance films date from the early to mid-1950s) she was still feeling her way into a new and unfamiliar medium, and the films that were abandoned (*Decroux*, a 1955 profile of mime artist Etienne Decroux), never intended for commercial distribution (*Fear Flight*, 1952, an often riveting study of dancer Beatrice Seckler) or technically faulty (*Jelly Roll Morton*, 1952) often prove as eloquent and revealing as the more polished work. *In Paris Parks* (1954) was her breakthrough short, assembled from candid footage of children (including her daughter Wendy) amusing themselves in Paris, which Clarke shot while failing to get her Decroux project off the ground.

Some materials have worn better than others, and Clarke's video output unavoidably makes less impression on Blu-ray than the film-sourced pieces, but overall presentational standards are exceptionally high. The discs' layout means that there are few 'extras' as such – photo galleries and home movies are regarded as part of the overall oeuvre – though some context is provided by a 1956 interview and a booklet with a personal introduction by Wendy Clarke.

Talent to burn: Shirley Clarke on the set of *The Connection* (1961)

New releases

Wenders's recent work, are here precisely keyed to emotional states, yet never violate the tenets of realism. There are echoes of such 70s masterpieces as *Kings of the Road* and *Alice in the Cities* – which share *Every Thing Will Be Fine*'s focus on emotionally isolated males struggling to connect with women, children and fathers – but also of the real/symbolic environments of Anthony Mann. It is surely this rediscovery of classicism – in which freedom results from a rigid adherence to aesthetic rules – that has liberated Wenders from the trap represented by his pursuit of casual spontaneity and enabled him to create one of his finest films in many years.
Disc: Neither the DVD nor the Blu-ray retains the 3D format used for theatrical screenings.

FILMS BY JOHN HUSTON

THE ASPHALT JUNGLE

John Huston; US 1950; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 112 minutes; 1.37:1; Features: audio commentary, 1983 documentary, audio interviews, footage of Huston discussing the film, 1979 episode of 'City Lights' featuring Huston, trailer

MOBY DICK

John Huston; US 1956; Twilight Time/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 116 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: isolated score track, audio commentary, 'A Bleached Whale: Recreating the Unique Color of Moby Dick', original theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

If you admire the cinema of John Huston, on the whole, you find yourself with a lot of explaining to do. For every *Fat City* (1972) there's a *Sinful Davey* (1969) or two, and in spite of the Prometheus-chained mythology of fettered genius that Lillian Ross helped to perpetuate around Huston, it is hard to imagine that *The Last Run* (1971) would have been much better had he finished it instead of Richard Fleischer, or that *The Bible: In the Beginning...* (1966) adds more to film history than Robert Bresson's unmade Book of Genesis movie, whose pre-production it piggybacked on, would have. Even Huston's role on some of his best films is difficult to evaluate: I rate *The Mackintosh Man* (1973) close to a masterpiece, but who knows how much of its atmosphere is owed to the diligent work of the second unit before Huston belatedly rolled on to the set?

The Asphalt Jungle and *Moby Dick*, released six years apart in the 1950s, represent some of Huston's best work of that decade. The former is a *noir* observing the build-up and aftermath of a jewel heist, taking considerable interest in both the process of the vault-cracking and the workaday lives and dreams of its gang of double-crossing crooks, including a superb, oleaginous Louis Calhern as their old-moneyed backer, the whole affair owing not a little to Huston's own 1948 *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. ("Sometimes men get greedy," muses Sam Jaffe's mastermind 'Doc' Riedenschneider, which could be the title to a Huston retrospective.)

Huston pushed the boundaries of realism as far as permissible within the studio machine, and along with Elia Kazan he was one of the day's innovators in location shooting, here filming exteriors in his mother's hometown of Cincinnati – though most of the rather palaver-heavy movie takes place in seedy rented lodgings, police offices and storage rooms.

BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (2)

Huston heist: *The Asphalt Jungle*

This was nothing compared to the epic journey through international waters that Huston undertook in pursuit of the white whale Moby Dick, resulting in a finished film whose enticements include some beautiful pieces of background actor portraiture, tempest-tossed whale-hunt scenes and a rafter-rattling sermon by Orson Welles, looking quite the leviathan himself as Melville's Father Mapple. (Second-unit director Freddie Francis, who had previously worked with Huston arranging the laboured clutter of 1953's *Beat the Devil*, is due a fair bit of credit for the action sequences.) Richard Baseheart, playing Ishmael, is long in the tooth to be called 'lad', but Gregory Peck's Ahab, dressed up like some possessed Lincoln, is close to definitive, as is Huston and screenwriter Ray Bradbury's adaptation. It's enough to make one forgive and forget *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (1958) – for a moment at least.
Disc: The big news here is that Twilight Time's transfer approximates the desaturation process applied to original release prints of *Moby Dick*, a post process along the lines of the jaundiced palette of Huston's *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1967). The result, it's no exaggeration to say, is a whole new movie.

THE MAN BETWEEN

Carol Reed; UK 1953; StudioCanal/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 102 minutes; 1.37:1; Features: documentary, interviews

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

A formidable shadow hangs over *The Man Between* – that of Reed's masterwork, *The Third Man*, made four years earlier. Once again we're in a European city shattered by the recent conflict and now segmented and chilled by the Cold War (Berlin substituting for Vienna); and once again a shady individual (James Mason taking over from Orson Welles) contrives a precarious living in the cracks of this fractured society. Following the failure of his ambitious Conrad adaptation *Outcast of the Islands* (1951), it's hard to avoid the sense of Reed retreating to safer, tried-and-tested territory. What he lacked was the flair and subversive wit of a Graham Greene script, Robert Krasker's darkly atmospheric lensing and the wheedling, insidious sound of Anton Karas's zither.

Overlook this, though – and Mason's shaky German accent – and there's a good deal to relish in *The Man Between*. Reed captures the mood of a weary, defeated city, rotten with suspicion and guilt, in a way that looks forward to Martin Ritt's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965) – likewise set in a grim, dangerous Berlin. Backing Mason's tarnished Ivo Kern and Claire Bloom as Susanne, the appealingly wide-eyed English innocent who falls for him, a rich gallery fills out the cast list: Hildegard Neff as Susanne's sister-in-law, her beauty haunted by the lie she's forced to live; Aribert Wäscher as a corpulently sinister East German *Polizist*; and Dieter Krause as the moon-faced, bike-riding small boy, close kin to his younger predecessor in *The Third Man*, whose devotion to Ivo and inadvertent betrayal of him link back to Bobby Henrey's Philippe in *The Fallen Idol* (1948).

The 'East Berlin' scenes, recreated in some drabber and more seriously ruined districts of the West, carry a powerful charge of twitchy paranoia; an episode in a prostitute's bedroom is shrewdly gauged, at once cynical and romantic, the nearest Harry Kurnitz's script gets to Greene. Too bad that the carefully affixed posters for East German leader Walter Ulbricht misspell his name as 'Ulbrich'...
Disc: A fine crisp 2K restoration. In the extras, Claire Bloom recalls the pleasure of working with Mason, though she found Reed inconsiderate and "distant". Memories of him from friends and colleagues in the 44-minute documentary are more affectionate.

THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH

Nic Roeg; UK 1976; StudioCanal Vintage Classics/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 18; 139 minutes; 2.35:1; Features: interviews, David Bowie French TV appearance, making-of featurette, soundtrack feature, trailer

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

David Bowie's much-mourned demise puts an even sharper spotlight on this 40th anniversary reissue of Nic Roeg's oblique sci-fi saga, which first showcased the music icon's very particular screen presence. As sundry interviews with his fellow collaborators on this extras-packed edition all tell it, it was seeing Alan Yentob's milestone BBC doc *Cracked Actor*, an intimate backstage portrait, that solved director Roeg's casting conundrum – who can play a believable visitor from another planet?

The answer is writ large here, as Bowie's portrayal of mysterious newcomer Thomas Jerome Newton cultivates an open yet unknowable allure not unlike the star's various on-stage personas, offering continually fascinating line readings and an off-kilter physicality. How much of this unique there-but-not-there quality relates to the narcotics issues that dogged a particularly troubled moment in Bowie's career (documented elsewhere, glossed over in the extras here) we'll never know, but he is the key point of focus in a film crammed with ideas, directed to the hilt, but somewhat emotionally uninvolving. Paul Mayersberg's adaptation of the Walter Tevis novel offers an uncannily accurate prediction of a society dominated by powerful corporations that control innovative consumer products, and in this the film appears fresher than ever. Still, notwithstanding Roeg's mercurial way with time, both in the moment and over the course of slinky narrative transitions, once Bowie's vulnerable extraterrestrial has been

Television

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU CARED

UK 1975-79; BBC/Second Sight/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 736 minutes; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

The comic potential of grimness up north, and the accompanying apparatus of cloth caps, allotments and whippets, has been explored exhaustively on television, from Alan Bennett to the *Goodies* episode 'Ecky Thump' by way of *Brass*. Peter Tinniswood's sitcom is distinguished by its unalloyed gleefulness – his characters embrace misery not to get one up on one another, like the Four Yorkshiremen in the sketch ("Cardboard box? You were lucky"), but for its own sake. "Where's the fun in fun?" asks Carter Brandon's fiancée Pat. Listening again to Uncle Mort warning Carter of the miseries yet in store for him, the relish with which he speaks of everything dreary, petty and life-denying, I was reminded of the Japanese commandant's complaint against Alec Guinness's self-martyring Lieutenant Colonel Nicholson in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*: "You are stubborn but you have no pride. You endure but you have no courage"; and also of the Dark Judges in *2000 AD*: "The crime is life – the sentence is death."

The morbid intentions are plain from the opening shot of the first episode – an overgrown graveyard on a hillside in the shadow of cooling towers, where Mort (the marvellous Robin Bailey) is a reluctant chief mourner at his wife's funeral, distracted by the prospect of missing the football and the possibility that the earth in which she is being laid might sprout a champion crop of onions. His sister – Carter's mother – and the other womenfolk have a more developed sense of propriety, perhaps, but it's no more comforting: high tea ends with an offer of a laxative and a warning not to get too comfy in the lounge, you'll be going home soon; after Uncle Bob's funeral, his widow plays a recording of his early-morning coughing.

Perhaps Tinniswood was reacting against the supposed trendiness that afflicted the north of England in the 1960s, via cinema and popular music. One episode finds Carter and Pat sitting on a hillside contemplating a half-built housing estate – the same scene crops up in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) with a similar dynamic, a female drive for domesticity stonewalled by male anxieties about loss of freedom. But whereas Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night...* wants more of life, Carter is less sure (though his libido, or something, perks up when he runs into that Linda Preston). In the radio comedies he wrote in the 80s and 90s, Tinniswood played with Lawrentian themes of sex, vegetation and class; but *IDKYC*, with its ambivalence about sexual pleasure, its distrust of modernity, its gossiping women, its post-industrial, post-hope landscapes, seems moored in Eliot's *Waste Land*: "And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said./Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said... While I was fishing in the dull canal/On a winter evening round behind the gashouse." (Tinniswood had a strong literary bent, by the way: I bet he was aware of the echoes.)

The dialogue has a lovely dry eloquence; the cast – including Liz Smith and John Comer – were brilliant, at least to begin with; and the show even boasts one of Ronnie Hazlehurst's best theme tunes, a pleasingly misleading Latin-flavoured dance number. From the start, though, the subtleties were undermined by a chucklesome studio audience, and something went badly wrong in the third and fourth series: replacing Anita Carey and a very young Stephen Rea as Pat and Carter, Keith Drinkel and Liz Goulding couldn't recapture the dialectic of indifference and yearning; and Tinniswood's gags broadened and coarsened – less Eliot than *Last of the Summer Wine*. But the first two series are imperishable.

Disc: Good-quality picture and sound.

I Didn't Know You Cared High tea ends with an offer of a laxative and a warning not to get too comfy in the lounge, you'll be going home soon

THE TROUBLESHOOTERS – MOGUL

UK 1965; BBC/Danann/Region 2 DVD; Certificate PG; 300 minutes; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

At some point, perhaps during the Thatcher years, British television fell out of love with corporate drama. But in the 1960s and 1970s the cut and thrust of commercial life and crisis in the boardroom supplied material for several quality popular dramas – *The Brothers*, *The Organization* and what became *The Troubleshooters*, which ran from 1965-72. To begin with, though, the series was called *Mogul*, after the oil multinational around which the stories revolved: hence the peculiar double naming of this disc – the first DVD issue – which contains the five episodes surviving from the first series.

It's an enjoyable combination of the gritty (the matter-of-fact treatment of prostitution in episode one, set around a North Sea oil-rig, feels quite *Z Cars*) and the surprisingly slick: though the bulk of the filming is studio-bound, with stock industrial footage to add atmosphere, there's more location shooting than BBC budgets usually allowed.

Though the racial and sexual attitudes on display are, how shall I say, traditional, some of the themes feel very modern – the episode 'Young Turk' explores (not in great depth) the problems of the West rubbing up against the Muslim world, Mogul being after all an oil company. But it's also intriguing to have glimpses of vanished worlds: 'Tosh and Nora' – an uncharacteristically sentimental-comic interlude, enlivened by a glimpse of a boyish John Noakes – harks back to the days when the merchant navy allowed hundreds of thousands of British working men a peripatetic lifestyle. It's unusual to see a drama in which the world of commerce is portrayed as ruthless but also fundamentally honest, rather than a hotbed of conspiracy. This is a very worthwhile rediscovery.

Disc: Sound is on occasion frustratingly muzzy, but for the most part fairly primitive materials nicely reproduced.

New releases

ensnared by his corporate captors, the suffering continues long after the point has been made. Ultimately, we get visionary creativity applied to a story that's a lot like watching the legs being pulled off a trapped insect.
Disc: The new 4k transfer supervised by DP Anthony Richmond is superb, the Blu-ray offering a thrillingly vivid rendition of the film's sun-drenched New Mexico locales and capturing Bowie's pallid skin tones and sheeny copper hair in a manner that makes him appear even more alien. In contrast to the generous complement of interviews with others, Bowie's only appearance is an off-hand late-70s French TV interview; a newly shot soundtrack doc is intriguing as far as it goes – revealing Bowie's abortive efforts and John Phillips's invaluable last-minute contribution – but could have been better illustrated with clips from the film itself.

PRETTY POISON

Noel Black; US 1968; Twilight Time/Region 1/A DVD/Blu-ray; 89 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: isolated music and effects track, audio commentaries, deleted scene script and commentary, original theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

We first catch sight of teenager Sue Ann Stepanek under the title sequence of *Pretty Poison*, marching along with some kind of all-female guard detachment, while a gangly, swan-necked stranger looks on from afar with a crooked smile. We know that the character, Dennis Pitt, is trouble, because the movie opens with him being released from a mental hospital, and because he's played by infamous mama's boy Anthony Perkins. But the 'prey' that Dennis has set his sights on is none other than Tuesday Weld, the all-American cornsilk-blonde bombshell who'd become a deity to pubescent boys across the country as the haughty Thalia Menninger in sitcom *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* (1959-62); here, director Noel Black further explores the sinister undercurrent of her over-caffeinated gee-whiz squirm, already exploited in George Axelrod's *Lord Love a Duck* (1966).

Dennis, whose emotional development seems to have stopped when he went into the mental hospital, is able to get close to Sue Ann by play-acting as an undercover CIA creep, but it transpires that Sue Ann has ulterior motives of her own, and is only as taken in as she wants to be – the girl *can* help it. Black, who would go on to a hit-and-miss career, doesn't put a foot wrong here, briskly mapping out the essential relationships and the key locations in the Massachusetts mill town where the movie lays its scene: the chemical factory and the river that receives its pollution, on whose banks Dennis deflowers Sue Ann after getting her to drop acid.

Adapting the tellingly titled source novel *She Let Him Continue* was Lorenzo Semple Jr, best known for the paranoiac thrillers *The Parallax View* (1974) and *Three Days of the Condor* (1975). I don't know who's responsible for Dennis's line "I foolishly performed an abortion on a peach tree," one of his many queer non sequiturs, but *Pretty Poison*, with its switcheroo plot in which an ostensibly insane hero is victimised by the straight small-town world, is well in line with the upending of understood moral order that would mark many American films in the years ahead. Modern femme fatale Sue Ann, at least, gets what her 1940s precedents never did – she remains at large.
Disc: The best transfer on the market, boasting two worthy commentary tracks, one previously heard on the Region 2 Second Sight release, with director Black, who died in 2014, and film historian Robert Fischer, who locates the film somewhere on a continuum between Hitchcock and Lynch.

Pyjama game: *Women in Love*

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Leslie Stevens; US 1960; Cinelicious/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 79 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: interview with stills photographer and technical consultant Alexander Singer, theatrical trailer, essay by Don Malcolm

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

"LOST FOR OVER 50 YEARS" per the box copy, *Private Property* is the seamy shoestring-budget debut of one Leslie Stevens – though its main selling point today is an early film appearance by Warren Oates, playing sexually immature dirtbag hipster 'Boots', one half of a pair of drifters who start playing house in an empty Beverly Hills manor, from where they plot to take their pleasure with a neighbouring housewife. Corey Allen – chickie-run fatality Buzz Gunderson from *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), badly in need of a shower and shave – plays Duke, the smooth-talking partner/handler of semi-simian Oates, while their target, whom Duke describes as "the pink twitch in the white Corvette", is Kate Manx, touchingly over-eager to please husband Robert Wark, an oblivious, sexless grey flannel suit. Stevens pointedly cuts between domestic routines at the two houses: husband and wife winding down while watching television, just as the boys across the way keep an eye on the "schmegegge-head" from an upstairs picture window.

Private Property was well and truly a backyard production – Manx was Stevens's wife, and the pool the boys watch her "kicking her stupid feet" in belonged to the Stevenses too. The class envy (and offhand racial resentment) is as thick as the reek of testosterone and stiff dungarees, and it's little wonder the PCA and the Legion of Decency came down hard on this frontal assault on all the trappings of American prosperity: the custom car and the vacation home and the nattering TV.

At this point Oates was still making a living from piecemeal work in TV westerns – a couple of years later, Stevens, as producer, would cast him in the short-lived rodeo drama *Stoney Burke*, before making it big himself with *The Outer Limits* (1963-65), mostly gigging thereafter in the vast wasteland and enjoying the prosperity he so grandly disdains here.
Disc: A restoration by the redoubtable UCLA Film & Television Archive does diligent service to the black-and-white photography of veteran DP Ted McCord and up-and-comer camera operator and future Oscar-winner Conrad Hall – not a bad crew to get together for peanuts.

WOMEN IN LOVE

Ken Russell; UK 1969; BFI/Region B Blu-ray; 131 minutes; Certificate 15; 1.75:1; Features: interview with Billy Williams, audio commentaries, audio-only Glenda Jackson NFT interview, 'The Pacemakers: Glenda Jackson' (1971), short film 'Second Best' (1972)

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

Women in Love is the one essential Ken Russell film, by which I don't mean simply that it is his best – though for me it is, exhilaratingly unafraid of absurdity and excess rather than drearily in their thrall, and brilliantly attuned to D.H. Lawrence's preoccupations with sex, class and freedom. Gerald Crich's nocturnal engagement with nature, rolling naked and rubbing his skin with handfuls of grass, is an example of the former, a scene at once beautiful and silly. Rupert Birkin's rude anatomising of a fig over an al fresco lunch is an instance of the latter: entirely Russell's own invention, but such a crafty variation on Lawrence's vegetal imagery that the seams don't show. But the odd thing is how this film contains in microcosm so many of the others: the tableau staged by the pretentious Hermione (Eleanor Bron) and Glenda Jackson's astonishing dance-off with a herd of cows both echo his Isadora Duncan film of two years earlier; Gerald's morbidity and sexual aggression hark back to *Dante's Inferno*, Russell's overheated *Omnibus* film about Dante Gabriel Rossetti. (Oliver Reed played both parts: did any other director get the measure of his intelligence and seemingly innate disgust with the world?) The somewhat lurid take on 1920s fashions (designed by Shirley Russell, Ken's wife) and the preoccupation with popular song foreshadow *The Boy Friend* (1971) and *Valentino* (1977). And then there is the bizarre scene in which the sculptor Loerke (Vladek Sheybal), play-acting with Gudrun in an Alpine hotel, lays out most of the plot *The Music Lovers* (1970)...

Although the film loses its grip towards the end – the emotional logic unravels in those later Swiss scenes – it is as close to a satisfactory adaptation of Lawrence as I can imagine. And it contains some of the most extraordinary acting in British film: Reed, Alan Bates in one of his best roles, as Birkin, and overshadowing even them, Glenda Jackson as Gudrun – fire and ice, seductive and terrifying, magnificent. Against these three, Jennie Linden, in a less showy part as Gudrun's schoolteacher sister Ursula, does very well to hold her own.
Disc: Picture and sound on this restoration are excellent. The pick of the extras are the Jackson profile and the short *Second Best* – a Lawrence adaptation directed by the actor Stephen Dartnell and starring Bates and his wife Victoria Ward: hardly more than a home movie, but fragilely beautiful.

BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (2)

Lost and found

HARD CONTRACT

OVERLOOKED FILMS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE ON UK DVD OR BLU-RAY

The title promises action – but this hitman tale unexpectedly turns into a heady talk-fest about love, mortality and commitment

By Tim Lucas

Largely forgotten today, *Hard Contract* (1969) marked James Coburn's return to serious drama for the first time since the once outdoorsy action star took a detour, beginning with *The Loved One* (1965), that rebranded him as an avatar of hip, countercultural satire. He was – at this height of his fame – Derek Flint, the President's Analyst, the Dr Benway-like surgeon of *Candy*. Yet the cold sobriety of *Hard Contract* makes it no less kooky, offbeat or psychedelic than those intermediary projects. Lurking behind its John Woo-like title is a movie that lures people in with the promise of an action thriller but then presents them with a heady talk-fest about love, morality and commitment. It may be the artiest picture produced by a major US studio up to that time.

It was the only feature ever directed by S. Lee Pogostin, a former television writer whose career shifted when – in heated response to production interference – director Sydney Pollack abruptly abandoned 'The Game', one of Pogostin's original dramas for *Bob Hope Presents Chrysler Theatre*, in 1965. Left in charge of post-production, Pogostin guided the troubled project to Emmy wins for both Pollack and its star, actor Cliff Robertson, and a Writers Guild Award for himself. After this, he was allowed to direct his two remaining screenplays for the show. The last of these, 'Free of Charge' (1967), starred John Cassavetes, so impressed by its script (about a jazz musician whose contrary thinking gets him placed under psychiatric observation) that he turned down better-paying offers to work for scale – and spent much of his own later directorial career exploring its central 'what is crazy?' question. The show's producers again meddled, threatening both star and director with lawsuits if they did not conform. Neither would. The programme eventually aired as intended, though buried in a time slot where no one could find it. Neither Pogostin nor Cassavetes would lend their name to series television again.

Pogostin's return to active duty, *Hard Contract* stars Coburn as John Cunningham, a hitman hired by a US government operative (Burgess Meredith) to take out three different targets in Torremolinos, Brussels and Madrid by a specific date. Cunningham typically refuses 'hard contracts' (eg working to fixed deadlines), but accepts this one because he's never been to Europe. His mission is ultimately secondary (especially since his commission of these hits is never depicted) to his learning how to relinquish such rules, because this is really the story of how a rigid man learns to bend, and how this makes it possible for him to love. In tame scenes once R-rated for their matter-of-fact depiction of prostitution, Cunningham initially makes love (with then newcomer Karen Black) as dispassionately as he kills. He's never been with a woman he hasn't paid for, refuses to go higher than $50, and has never kissed or slept with anyone. Things change in Torremolinos, where Cunningham's greying good looks catch the eye of Sheila Metcalfe (Lee Remick), a restless, sensation-seeking, implicitly frigid divorcee romping around the continent with a 'family' of idly rich friends led by her effusive mentor Adrianne (Lilli Palmer, outstanding). Learning that Cunningham is looking to "buy a woman" for $50, Sheila presents herself as a pricey London call girl and, it seems, experiences her first orgasm. True love ensues, along with all the arduous separations, negotiations and confessions that must come with it.

When the last of Cunningham's targets is finally identified, it turns out to be a friend of his new 'family', a man who "used to be you" (a formidable Sterling Hayden, in his first screen role since *Dr. Strangelove* five years earlier) – and a man he is disinclined to kill but must, if he intends to embrace the life he's finally found for himself. The dual threads of love and death intertwine into a heightened, philosophical discussion of immoral trends in society as it was in 1969, while foreseeing the amoral society we have since become.

While admiring Goya's *The Third of May 1808* in the Prado, Meredith's character offers: "There's no such thing as crime; it's something else now. We used to make the act of murder a frightening visual experience, but it's not frightening any more... *Of course* it's immoral to murder for profit. It's *immoral*. It's just that – in these times – it's not *that* immoral. It is wrong; I am simply saying that – in our time – it's not *that* wrong."

To which Sheila replies, "No, it's not true. It's just that it's not *that* untrue."

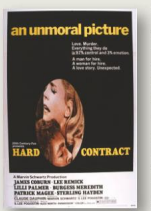
The whole film is like this. *Hard Contract* ends with Coburn speculating to Remick, in the clench of heated lovemaking, "Freedom and the dignity of man may become the greatest mass murderers of our century. Watch and see." Pretentious? Perhaps – but if it's wrong, it's not *that* wrong. S

The hitman and her: James Coburn and Lee Remick in *Hard Contract*

REX FEATURES (2)

This is really the story of how a rigid man learns to bend, and how this makes it possible for him to love

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

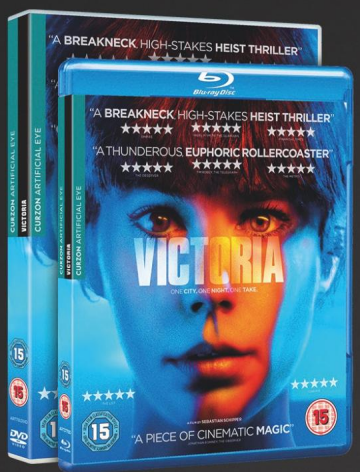


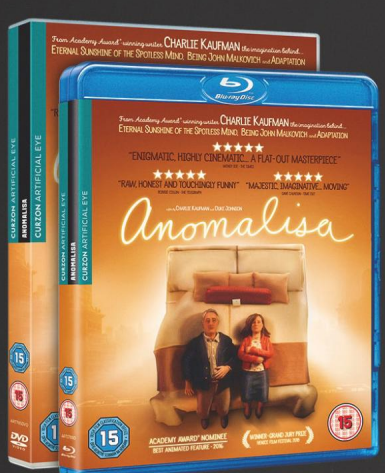
'Unfortunately [the film's] interesting ideas are drowned by Pogostin's flaccid direction in which points are stated rather than made. The pretentious talk scenes apart, Pogostin sometimes shows wit and imagination in his commentary on contemporary American problems, but the plot can hardly sustain the weight, and so is padded by dialogue... [the film] is that most unsatisfactory of failures in that behind it one glimpses a much better film than the surface suggests'

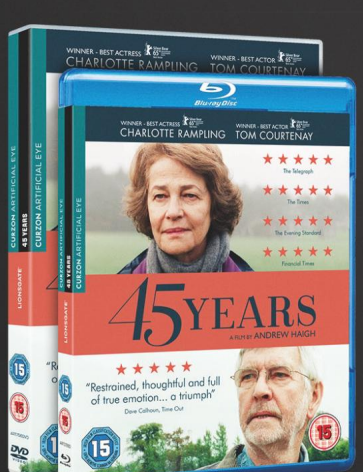
Phil Hardy 'Monthly Film Bulletin', Dec 1969

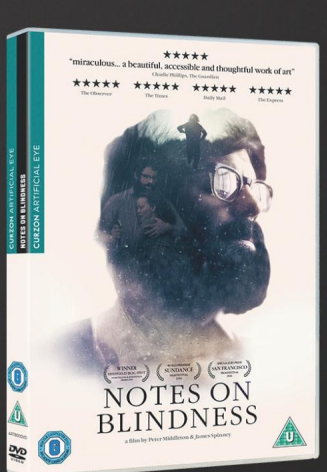
CURZON
ARTIFICIAL EYE

TAKE HOME THE BEST FILMS OF 2016









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Books

Stare case: Véra Clouzot in *Les Diaboliques* (1955)

DARK CONTINENT

EURO GOTHIC

Classics of Continental Horror Cinema

By Jonathan Rigby, Signum Books, 416pp, £24.99, ISBN 9780957648159

Reviewed by Kim Newman

This is the third in a trilogy of books which Jonathan Rigby began with *English Gothic* and *American Gothic*. The current volume covers the years between 1896 and 1983 – though it mentions 21st-century revivals of the form in Spain and France. Europe itself is a shifting battleground, far less easy to pin down than Britain or the US in terms of its film industries. Quite a few of the films under discussion here are international co-productions, and several key players have careers spanning several countries. Jesús Franco made films in Spain, France, Germany, Turkey, Brazil and elsewhere, and many Euro gothics are built around British or American stars such as Christopher Lee, Boris Karloff and Vincent Price. In his introduction, Rigby admits that his self-set remit was to cover the gothic output of Germany, France, Spain and Italy, with a few unavoidable extras – like the Belgian *Daughters of Darkness* (1971) – roped in. He plainly regrets leaving great swathes of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe off the gothic map. "To add that lot to the mix would have resulted in a book of seriously unwieldy proportions," he writes, ruefully. "Maybe next time."

The approach is to give tentpole attention to 100 or so titles – from Richard Oswald's *Unheimliche Geschichten* (*Uncanny Tales*, 1919) to Pupi Avati's *Zeder* (1983) – while putting them in the context of the hordes of other works. The necessary trends, names and films are covered: Caligarism, Mario Bava, Jean Rollin, Paul Naschy, Dario Argento, Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932), Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* (1955), Franju's *Eyes Without a Face* (1960). But Rigby delves a lot deeper too, and the real value of his intricate, absorbing history is that he highlights films, filmmakers, movements and historical contexts (especially shifts of censorship) that haven't been covered much before. Besides the auteurs and icons who've had their retrospectives and biographies already, Rigby looks at the careers of less-often considered creatives, such as the Italian director of gothic kink Renato Polselli (*The Vampire and the Ballerina*, *The Reincarnation of Isabel*), the eclectic Spanish screenwriter Antonio Fos (*The Cannibal Man*, *The Vampires' Night Orgy*) and the busy Swiss character actor Howard Vernon (from Franco's *The Awful Dr. Orlof* to Borowczyk's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Miss Osbourne*). Sometimes, even the unflappable author is taken aback by the wayward courses charted by these folks – turning away from the more

Rigby ventures abroad in his book rather in the spirit of the coach party in Hammer's 'Dracula: Prince of Darkness'

BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (2)

X-rated (S-rated in Spain) activities of some of his subjects well before devotees such as Stephen Thrower or Tim Lucas would abandon them.

The four chosen countries' traditions entwine. Not only did the German Edgar Wallace-derived *krimi* of the 1960s evolve into the Italian slasher *gialli* of the 1970s, but some co-productions had Janus identities: Massimo Dallamano's *giallo Cosa avete fatto a Solange* (*What Have You Done to Solange?*) was sold in Germany as the *krimi Das Geheimnis der grunen Stecknadel* (*The Secret of the Green Stick Pin*). Rigby notes the changing fortunes of the gothic. A 1970s boom in Spanish horror was initially possible only if the horrors were identified with other countries, which is why Amando de Ossorio's Blind Dead are Portuguese and Naschy's Wolf Man is supposed to be Polish. This restriction ended with the death of General Franco, but the new regime favoured art over exploitation and put a temporary halt to Spanish horror cinema.

Very usefully, Rigby notes the castle and villa locations favoured by gothic filmmakers, so devotees can plan tours of Europe to tread the actual stones of the Austrian castle – Burg Kreuzenstein – inhabited by Bava's *Baron Blood* (the castle is also seen to lesser effect in Freddie Francis's *Gebissen wird nur nachts*/*The Vampire Happening*). The literary gothic flame was lit partly by tourism; writers such as the 18th-century pioneer of the gothic novel Ann Radcliffe devoted as many words to the picturesque, visitable ruins and forests of Europe as to their plots or characters – the approach chimes rather nicely with Rigby's take on continental horror. It's no surprise that the resolutely English critic began his series with English gothic, for the British tradition remains his core influence and the basis of his argument – he ventures abroad rather in the spirit of the coach party in Hammer's *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (1966), aware of mortal (and moral) peril but staunch in the face of the chaos of Euro Gothic and intrigued by the erotic, surreal, transgressive and terrifying possibilities of lands beyond the well-kept Pinewood lawns trodden by monsters in British horror. Dry wit, expressed often in sardonic sub-headings ('Another Bloody Countess'), is among the author's defences against the lurking hooded axe-men, rivulets of blood on starlets' *décolletages* and obsessive zoom shots that distinguish the tattier end of the field.

Sadly, the key gothic literary locale of Ireland – land of Le Fanu, Stoker, Wilde and others – is one of the misty territories unmapped in the trilogy, though the country only began to produce horror films in any number well after Rigby's cut-off point. Similarly, it's only in the 21st century that Scandinavia – almost as a corollary to the *krimi-giallo*-like boom in Nordic *noir* – has turned out enough horror films to suggest a separate branch of the tradition. Also, South and Central America, all of Asia and Australia and New Zealand remain *terra incognita* in Rigby's ongoing project, so – like many a horror franchise reboot – there's scope for a fourth book in the trilogy to cover the rest of the world, filling the last blank spots of the map in with an appropriate Kensington Gore shade of British red.

THE CINEMA HYPOTHESIS

Teaching Cinema in the Classroom and Beyond

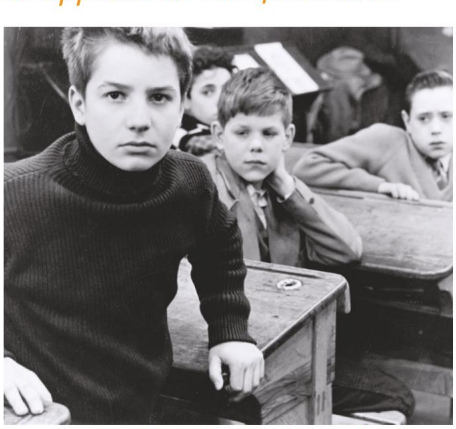
By Alain Bergala, translated by Madeline Whittle, FilmmuseumSynemaPublications, 144pp, £19, ISBN 9783901644672

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

To make a clean breast straightaways, I should say that I am perhaps not the ideal reader for a book with the subtitle 'Teaching Cinema in the Classroom and Beyond'. Alain Bergala's treatise outlines his unorthodox ideas for the implementation of film studies in classrooms, beginning at the primary school level. I belong to the sceptical body that Bergala writes of, who "turn up their noses to proclaim that everything that comes out of schools is tarnished with the fact of obligation and thus will never be suited for the arrival of the arts, which should fall within the jurisdiction of a modest individualism". My own introduction to film art as an adolescent came, as with most things I've truly cared for, from outside the channels of official school culture, and in common with a great number of semi-self-made cinephiles, I carry the conviction – justified or not – that my own course of initiation is the only really valid one, and that cinema belongs not to the apple-polishers but to the truants, like the book's cover star, Antoine Doinel, as he appears in *The 400 Blows*. Bergala and I can agree on one thing – the early years are crucial.

It should be said that Bergala is well aware of the paradox involved in any attempt to make the work of art – a disobedient object if it is worthy of the word 'art' – at home within the confines of the classroom: "Teaching is concerned with the rule," he writes, paraphrasing Jean-Luc Godard, "while art must aspire to the rank of the exception." Born in 1943, Bergala's initiation in the seventh art came through the ciné-club culture that was incubator to the great generation of French cinephilia, itself in no small way defined by young men applying the tenets of their classical education, with its idea of a canon, to the systematic study of cinema. It is part of Bergala's contention, however, that the film culture of his youth – the abundance of neighbourhood theatres in which high- and lowbrow films mixed freely, an arts journalism that had not yet been made entirely obedient to PR and marketing juggernauts – is no longer available to most young people in France outside the major cities. Faced with an ever more dominant monoculture (Bergala writes dismissively of "big distribution networks", "the firepower of popcorn cinema" and "pseudo-tastes created by marketing"), Bergala imagines that the classroom may become a last redoubt for film-as-art, a place where the child who might never otherwise have known that such strange cinematic objects exist can cross paths with a film by Bresson or Kiarostami. The idea, as Bergala has it, is not to clobber the student with hidebound masterpieces until they bow in obedience, but simply to facilitate access, "to allow the necessary strangeness of the work of art to make its slow progress on its own, through a long process of impregnation for which the school must simply create the best conditions possible".

Cinema belongs not to the apple-polishers but to the truants, like Antoine Doinel, as he appears in 'The 400 Blows'



Truant stories: François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows*

If the multiplex was dominating most of the cinematic market share 15 years ago, when Bergala first published his text, how much more must this be the case today, when it appears for the first time in English translation? A one-time *Cahiers du cinéma* contributor, occasional film director, and teacher, Bergala wrote *The Cinema Hypothesis* as an explanation of the ideas he had put forth when operating as a consultant on cinema studies to Jack Lang, then the minister of education and planning a shake-up in the arts curriculum. Bergala is a lively and lucid thinker, his proselytisation embedded with quotations from a wide range of sources including Pier Paolo Pasolini, Serge Daney and Vladimir Nabokov, whose aim of teaching students "to become spectators who experience the feeling of creation itself" is crucial to Bergala's ideas.

The Cinema Hypothesis must be of considerable interest to those involved in teaching cinema on any level. When Bergala discusses what he calls "the pedagogy of creation", explained as "making the logical and imaginative effort to move slightly back upstream in the creative process, to the moment where the filmmaker made his decisions", he lays out ideas invaluable to anyone who wants to seriously think or write about movies. The book's penultimate and longest chapter, 'Toward a "Creative Analysis"', points to a great deficiency in film critical discourse, which tends to consider the actual practical and physical considerations of making a film as entirely secondary, if at all – since the days when Otis Ferguson caught a train out to Hollywood to see how the sausage was made, rare has been the critic who has bothered to get into the nitty-gritty exigencies of the moviemaking process, preferring to imagine that movies spring fully formed from an auteur's imagination. Even for those of us long matriculated, there is much we have to learn.

KING OF JAZZ

Paul Whiteman's Technicolor Revue

By James Layton and David Pierce, Media History Press, 304pp, 122 colour and 184 b/w illustrations, $40, ISBN 9780997380101

Reviewed by David Robinson

"The truth is that I have never played jazz, and neither to my knowledge has any member of my band." Paul Whiteman, a classically trained perfectionist, recoiled from the improvisation that made jazz "a haphazard thing". Even so he was smart enough not to spurn the regal title bestowed on him by the press, and which helped a lot in making the Whiteman orchestra the biggest musical phenomenon of the 1920s. His ambition was to realise symphonic jazz, and generally to elevate popular music and bridge the divide between it and classical. His collaboration with Gershwin permanently marked American music, and the lasting appeal of *King of Jazz* (1930) lies in the sheer quality of the music, even if some of the interpretations now seem quaintly archaic, while the very names of the scintillating artists are forgotten – apart from Bing Crosby, in his promising screen debut.

Whiteman's success extended to recordings and radio shows, and movies were inevitable. Universal won him with a deal that gave him 40 per cent of the profits.

King of Jazz is crucial to the story of Universal. Carl Laemmle, who had emigrated from Germany when he was 18, was an early Hollywood meteor. In 1906, at the age of 40, he left a good job in a Wisconsin clothing factory to invest in the nickelodeon business in Chicago. Three years later, having defied the Edison Patents trust, he was producing films and running one of the country's biggest film exchanges. Three more years and Universal Pictures was inaugurated, and in 1915 he moved west and created the 230-acre Universal City.

As Ogden Nash phrased it, "Uncle Carl Laemmle/Has a very large faemmle" – many of whom (including half-cousin William Wyler) found comfortable employment at Universal. The apple of Laemmle's eye was his son Julius, who was already sitting in on company meetings at six, produced a successful collection of shorts from his own college stories at 18, and was officially renamed Carl Laemmle Jr. A month before Whiteman and his band arrived in Hollywood, and two months after Junior's 21st birthday, his father appointed him general manager and head of the studio. Not everyone was thrilled, and 'Junior' was a general term of disparagement for this cute, baby-faced, five-foot-three youngster.

Playing it cool: Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra

Layton and Pierce render belated justice to Junior. He had supported Paul Fejös's *Lonesome* (1928) and *Broadway* (1929), and was determined to raise the quality of Universal's A pictures. His personal projects included *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), the great Universal horror cycle – from *Dracula* (1931) to *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) – and, his last picture, the finest version of *Showboat* (1936). If he believed in a project or an artist he was undaunted by escalating budgets – a perilous virtue: by 1936 Universal was close to ruin, the Laemmles were out, and Junior's career was ended at 28.

The idea of a career biopic foundered, since Whiteman was nobody's vision either of romantic hero or great musician

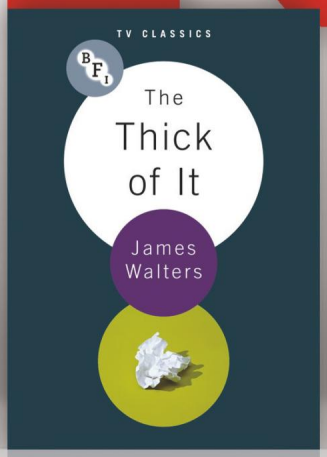
But *King of Jazz* was his, and nothing was spared. Two directors – Wesley Ruggles and Fejös – came and went while a score or more of writers tried to come up with a story. The initial project for a career biopic foundered, since Whiteman, a rotund jelly of a man, was nobody's vision of either a romantic hero or a great musician. Universal therefore reverted to the already well-tried early talkie formula of the revue film. As director they hired John Murray Anderson, who had never made a film but was the supreme producer of Broadway revues and the musical stage shows that often accompanied first-run films. Anderson brought his brilliant Dutch designer Herman Rosse. It was the first revue film wholly in two-colour Technicolor, often beautiful – even though it couldn't do blue well, so that Gershwin's 'Rhapsody' turns out in green.

King of Jazz fulfilled everyone's aspirations – except at the box office. Even a supporting stage show with Gershwin himself failed to maintain the first-run audience. During the 18 months *King of Jazz* had been in production, the Great Depression had set in, audiences had tired of revue films, and the swing era was on its way, eclipsing the Whiteman style.

Layton, Pierce and the newly established Media History Press have achieved a book glamorous enough to match the film itself. The complex story is told with shared delight and in unsparing detail. The illustrations alone afford a comprehensive history of the production, with Rosse's vivid designs shown side by side with their realisation on film, and exquisite colour images, directly from the original negative. Especially touching, though, are the beaming group portraits of the present-day NBC Universal picture and sound restoration teams who have triumphantly recreated the real *King of Jazz* from elements long lost and recovered from 14 collections across the world.

Tickling the ivories: the 'Rhapsody in Blue' sequence from *King of Jazz*

Read



THE THICK OF IT

James Walters, BFI TV Classics/ Palgrave, 160pp, paperback, £15.99, ISBN 9781844577507

In the first title dedicated to Armando Iannucci's landmark political comedy, which skewered politics in the age of spin, James Walters provides an in-depth study of the programme's achievements, examining its power and influence within society and evaluating its legacy as a work of television art. The title is new to our BFI TV Classics series, in which television scholars, critics and novelists provide critical readings of key individual television programmes and series.

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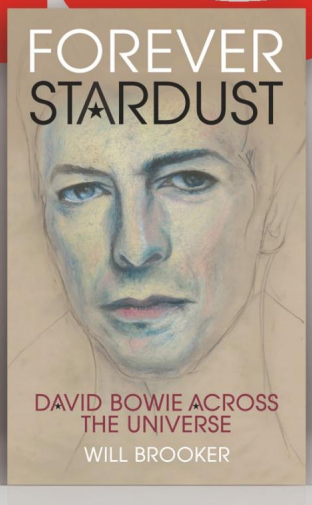

FOREVER STARDUST

David Bowie Across the Universe

By Will Brooker, I.B. Tauris, 272pp, paperback, £9.99, ISBN 9781784531423

David Bowie challenged cultural expectations from the early 1970s until his final masterpiece, *Blackstar*. *Forever Stardust* offers a new understanding of this remarkable and significant artist. To be published on what would have been Bowie's 70th birthday, the book looks at his work not as a linear evolution through calendar time, but as a matrix, a dialogue, a network of ideas that echo back and forth across the five decades of his career, interacting with each other and with the surrounding culture. It explores Bowie's creative output as a whole, tracing the repetitions and obsessions that structure his work, discovering what they tell us about Bowie in all his forms, from Ziggy Stardust to David Jones.

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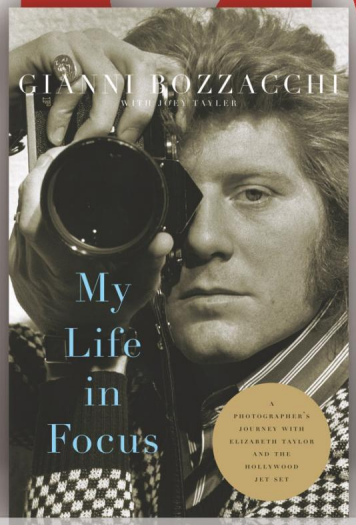

MY LIFE IN FOCUS

A Photographer's Journey with Elizabeth Taylor and the Hollywood Jet Set

By Gianni Bozzacchi, University Press of Kentucky, hardback and ebook, illustrated, $39.95/£43.50, ISBN 9780813168746

When Gianni Bozzacchi accepted an assignment as a photographer on the set of *The Comedians* (1967), his beautiful candid photos drew the attention of Elizabeth Taylor, who hired him as her personal photographer. Bozzacchi would go on to enjoy a jet-set life as her friend and confidant – preserving unguarded moments between Taylor and Richard Burton as they travelled the world – and became an internationally renowned photographer, shooting some of the biggest celebrities of the 20th century, including Audrey Hepburn, Steve McQueen, Raquel Welch and Clint Eastwood. This lively memoir, illustrated with many of the photographer's most iconic images, is an invaluable behind-the-scenes look at the business of filmmaking and the perils of celebrity.

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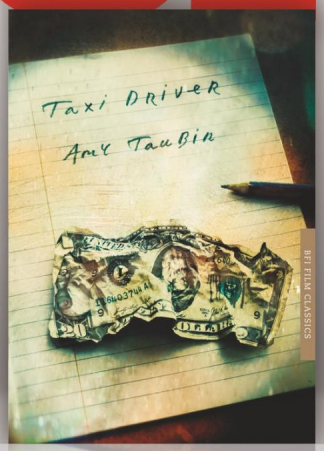

TAXI DRIVER

2nd Edition

By Amy Taubin, BFI Film Classics/ Palgrave, 188pp, paperback, £12.99, ISBN 9781844574995

Taxi Driver is one of the major films of the 1970s and established Martin Scorsese's reputation as a prominent American director. Robert De Niro is mesmerising as Travis Bickle, the personification of American masculinity post-Vietnam. Cybill Shepherd and Jodie Foster give fine support, and Scorsese brought in the great Bernard Herrmann to write what turned out to be his last score. Crucially, Scorsese rooted *Taxi Driver* in its New York locations, tuning the film's violence in to the hard reality of the city.

This second edition has a new foreword by Amy Taubin and a stunning jacket design by Marc Atkins. Taubin considers *Taxi Driver* in the context of the recent politics of race and masculinity in the US, and draws on an exclusive interview with De Niro about his memories of making the film.

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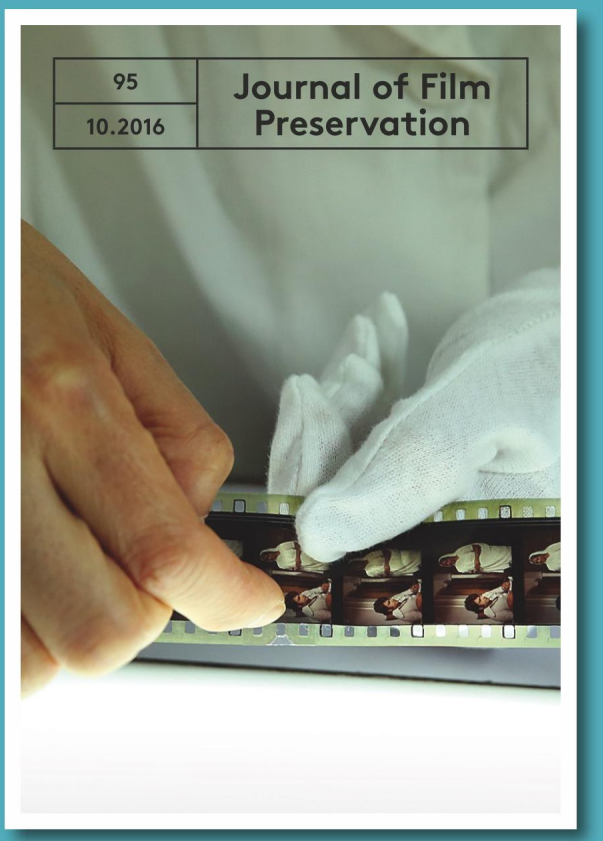

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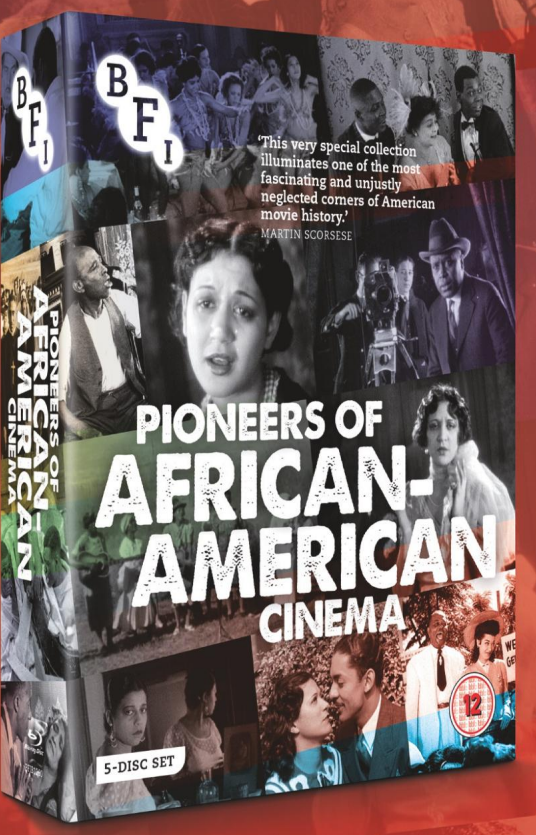

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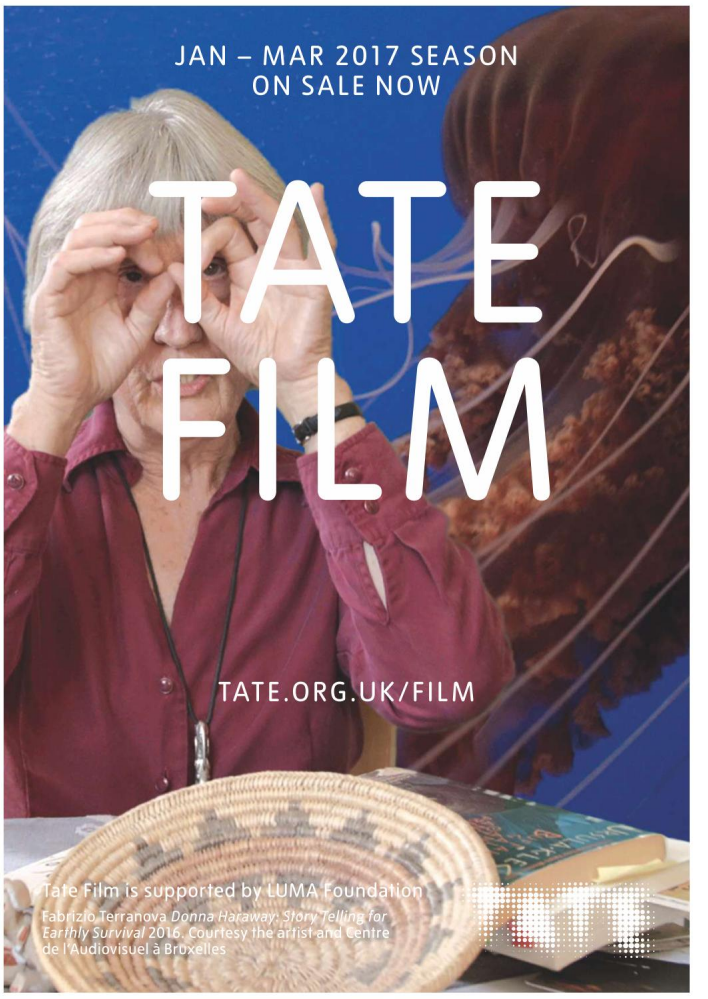

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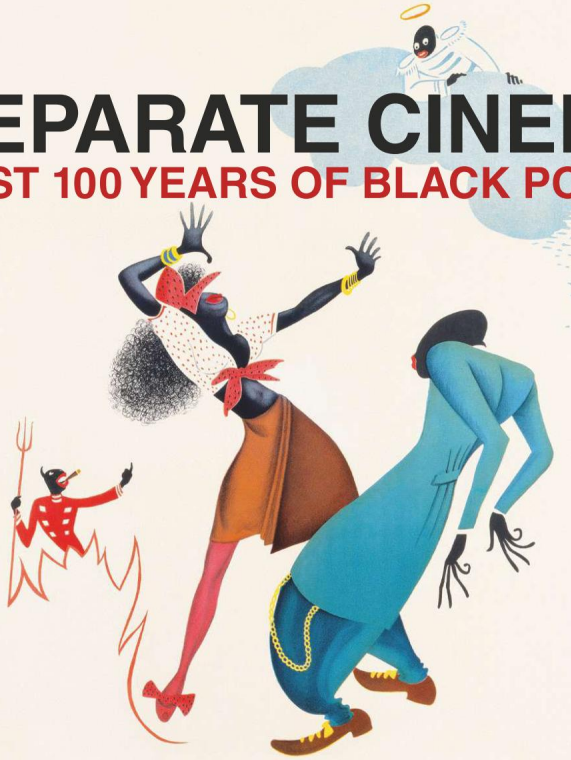

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KILL YOUR DARLINGS

The annual film critics' choice was as revealing as ever ('Films of the year', *S&S*, January). Although the dominant theme was unconventional women and outsiders, many films were surprisingly conservative, with writers choosing small, self-reflexive stories over expansive ideas. After this politically regressive year, it's surely time for the return of savage, surreal satire? At least the borders between formats are breaking down, with Netflix, iPlayer and HBO films appearing beside festival darlings.
Christopher Fowler *London*

BAD ANGEL

I rarely find myself in agreement with Nick Pinkerton, but his review of *The Birth of a Nation* (*S&S*, January), Nate Parker's vanity project (starring/written by/directed by/produced by/screwed up by...) was spot-on. He might have added that the audience is left unsure whether the ludicrous angel seen at the end is intended to be welcoming Nat Turner to heaven or Nate Parker to the Academy Awards ceremony.
Dave Howell *Ilkley, Yorkshire*

TRAIN WRECK

I found Henry K. Miller's review of *The Girl on the Train* (*S&S*, December) a bit unfair to Tate Taylor, at least in blaming the weaknesses of the film on the director. If Taylor deserves criticism then surely it's for following too faithfully the rubbish source material.

Miller says the film is "awkwardly structured", though he acknowledges that the first-person narrative, from the point of view of the main women characters, comes from Paula Hawkins's source novel. But all of the problems he subsequently points out, he attributes to Taylor, though almost all of them derive from the source. He says the most revealing of Megan's flashbacks comes after her death – yes, of course, just like in the novel. Flashbacks based on lies and fantasies? Uh huh, just like the novel. Too many confusing plot twists? Ditto. "The fantasy of affluent suburban motherhood that Rachel... idealises, never comes into critical focus." OK, but Hawkins never questions it either.

While I agree with Miller that *Gone Girl*, both the novel and the film, were much better than the book and film of *The Girl on the Train*, in the latter case the flaws with the film are very much the flaws of the novel, not the director. Give credit where credit is due – you don't expect to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.
Alec Anderson *by email*

WRITING WRONGS

In your editorial ('Lines of Credit', *S&S*, January) you highlight the quirk by which television singles out writers for creative adulation, while in cinema the convention is that praise is weighted towards the director.

The explanation may lie in the early years of television, when actors from repertory theatres were used, because of their ability to learn lines quickly and perform several times a week, all to a tight schedule. The theatrical world tends to award creative responsibility to the writer; perhaps television inherited the tendency.
Richard Sherwood-Farnfield *Maidstone*

LETTER OF THE MONTH
LOST IN TRANSLATION

There are many things in Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival* to admire, the chief of which is seeing a film whose central character is female – and whose intelligence is both self-evident and acknowledged by all other characters. Adam Nayman (Reviews, *S&S*, December 2016) does a fine job of describing the qualities of Amy Adams's performance in that role. However, his proposal that the film is "based faithfully" on Ted Chiang's story will not wash.

One significant difference (major spoiler alert) is that we now get a reason for the extraterrestrial visit; no satisfyingly studied withholding of the kind seen in, say, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) here. The reason given – because they see they will need humanity's help 3,000 years in the future – is astonishingly clunky, and tied to the primary breaking of faith with the original.

Chiang's 'Story of Your Life' deftly explores the extent to which the consequences of our actions are determined and knowable, or uncertain and unknowable, or both. It sustains an elegantly mysterious ambivalence. In the film this is crassly collapsed into 'Louise see future' and used to explore her personal decision to conceive a child she knows is doomed to die young.

Adams powerfully conveys the beauty, courage and sadness of that decision. But what makes the original story profound is that Chiang moves on from the particular of her choice to explore the general question of whether the consequences of all of our actions are determined, or uncertain, or both, and the beauty, courage and sadness with which, faced with that conundrum, we must each understand the story of our life. Sadly, that is almost entirely absent from the film.
David Lane London

DON'T LET'S BE BEASTLY TO THE GERMANS

I am grateful to Pamela Hutchinson for highlighting Hitchcock's most misunderstood film, *Jamaica Inn* (Home Cinema, *S&S*, January). In 1938, the British government and censors discouraged any film that might offend foreign powers, including Germany: and so a portrayal of a madman in authority over a murderous band of thugs could only be a costume drama. That knowledge places the film squarely alongside Hitchcock's espionage sextet and gives greater meaning to Laughton's over-the-top performance.
Stephane Duckett, *London*

Additions and corrections

January p.64 *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, Certificate 15 112m 37s; p.70 Almost Christmas, Certificate 12A 110m 50s; p.75 *The Coming War on China*, Certificate 12A 112m 39s; p.80 *The Heritage of Love*, Certificate 12A 79m 1s; p.81 *I Am Bolt*, Certificate PG 107m 19s; p.90 *Snowden*, Certificate 15 134m 23s
December p.77 *Into the Inferno*, not submitted for theatrical classification. Video certificate: 12. Running time: 106m 49s; p.84 *Paterson*, film extracts: *Island of Lost Souls* (1932); p.85 *Sky Ladder The Art of Cai Guo-Qiang*, not submitted for theatrical classification. Video certificate: 12. Running time: 78m 49s; p. 90 *The Unknown Girl*, certificate 15 106m 30s

ENDINGS...

GOODFELLAS

If there's a lesson in the final scenes of Martin Scorsese's blackly comic Mafia epic, it's that some people never learn

By Trevor Johnston

Henry Hill spent his childhood dreaming of becoming a gangster like the wise-guys in his New York neighbourhood, but he didn't envisage where the realisation of that ambition would take him – to a place of darkness from which he was fortunate to emerge with his life. Martin Scorsese's 1990 adaptation of Nicholas Pileggi's nonfiction bestseller is remarkable, even by his own standards, playing head against heart as it documents a lifestyle where money and power are accompanied by a loss of moral compass and an insidious underlying paranoia, framing everything through a stylistic overload, pressing the audience to experience the highs and lows from Hill's perspective. The thrill ride is so exciting and immersive that the challenge is to remain conscious of the cautionary true-life tale that underpins it – which is essentially the same dilemma faced by Ray Liotta's central character in his criminal rise and fall.

The turning point is reached in a truly out-there sequence in which Liotta, now working an illicit sideline running cocaine, is over-indulging in his own supply and haring hither and thither – preparing a new shipment, overseeing a pasta sauce recipe, delivering silencers to the volatile Jimmy (an intense Robert De Niro), all the while anxious about the police helicopters hovering overhead. Scorsese and editor Thelma Schoonmaker pull out all the stops with a wild jumble of jump cuts, scored to a restless succession of fragmented music cues, from Muddy Waters to The Who. The overall effect is to leave the viewer punch-drunk, sensing that Liotta has reached a point where he is virtually wired to explode – at which point the drug squad swoops on his house, and his life (and the film's grammar) will thence change forever.

A subsequent intertitle reads 'Aftermath', and indeed the rest of the film plays out as a slow comedown from this pivotal moment. A stark dilemma now lies before Liotta's Henry, whether to take his chances on the run, or cut a deal with the authorities. Again, Scorsese's formal choices express the blunt facts, cutting between two separate mid-shots – Henry and spouse Karen (Lorraine Bracco) in one, a stone-faced FBI agent in the other – with purposefully jarring intent, making clear Henry's utter isolation and powerlessness. Afterwards, in court, Henry is brought face to face with De Niro's glowering Jimmy and Paul Sorvino's stern mob boss, pointing the finger at each in turn. He has shamefully broken the code of loyalty, yet in possibly the most audacious shot of an audacious film, Liotta offers his own summation – by stepping out of the dock and walking round the courtroom, addressing the audience directly. In such a fiercely realist film, breaking the fourth wall is a radical manoeuvre, to say the least, but it gives Liotta's protagonist one last moment of self-revelation, elucidating his regret that a period of his life with seemingly limitless financial reward and no moral boundaries is now well and truly over.

Hill's life, even at the film's close, manifests a yearning for criminal liberation, stymied by the confines of law-abiding behaviour

Cut to a lateral track through Henry's idea of Dullsville, an out-of-town housing development provided by the witness protection scheme. There's a subtle dissolve in-and-out in mid-shot, just to underline the sameness of living in such suburban anomie – where you can't even get proper Italian takeout food, just egg noodles and ketchup – while a brief cut to Joe Pesci's unhinged gun-toting mobster plays up the contrast between then and now. Picking up his morning newspaper from the front step, Liotta gives us a parting smile, but it's important to keep paying attention thereafter, as Scorsese uses every moment of screen-time to suggest that Hill's down but not out.

For one thing, the soundtrack's Sid Vicious version of 'My Way' is certainly a gesture of defiance against convention (even if it's uttered by a doomed self-destructive junkie), while the accompanying captions list Hill's subsequent arrest for drugs activity in distant Seattle, plus a period of clean probation coincidental with the breakdown of his marriage. In this instance, the movie isn't over till it's over, and Hill's life, so vividly unfurled before us in the previous two-hour-plus cavalcade of murder and mayhem, even here manifests an irrepressible yearning for criminal liberation, stymied by the confines of law-abiding behaviour. 'My Way' indeed.

***GoodFellas* is rereleased in UK cinemas on 20 January and screens at BFI Southbank, London, as part of a Scorsese retrospective**

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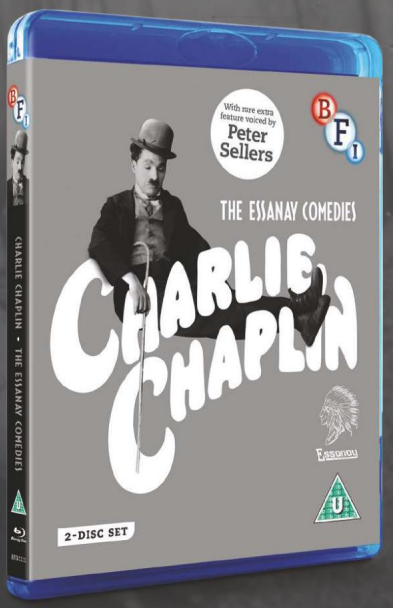

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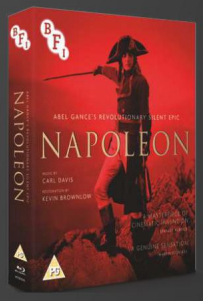

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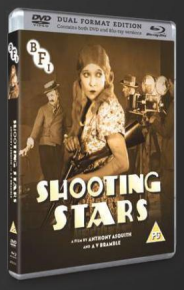

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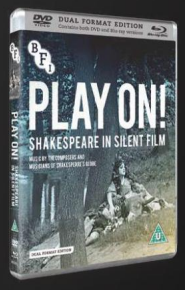

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